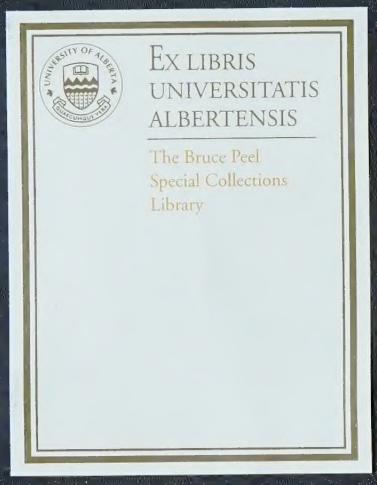
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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

MDes FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

By

JESSE SHERBURNE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN

PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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IN

INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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# So a Semionaut walks into a bar and asks for directions...
## Art Bar: The Hybridization of Art and Design and the Emergence of the Creative.

By

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Faculty of Graduate Studies
The University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta,
December, 2007

## Abstract

This support document examines the issues surrounding the exhibition entitled *Art Bar* created by the author. The exhibition consisted of a fully functioning bar environment housed in the exhibition space of the Art Gallery of Alberta. The project challenged definitions of participatory artwork, conceptual and installation art, the practice of design and dealt with aspects of social engagement in a context generated by the experience of art. *Art Bar* was an attendance record setting event that generated much debate over the evolving role of the artist and designer as well as raised questions about disciplinary borders, authorship, participation, pop culture and a multitude of other aspects associated with the creation, exhibition and dissemination of a creative project. An outline of the histories of art and design from which the author drew as well as the project's relationship to current theory and creative practice are presented as a written accompaniment to the actual exhibition.

Keywords: Conceptual Art, Relational Aesthetics, Design, Creative, Participation, Everyday, Ready-made, Fluxus, Droog, Critical, Semionaut.

## Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my incredible parents and their unending belief in me.

To both of you for your intelligence and creativity which has always been the inspiration behind everything I have done.

To my Dad for teaching me to see the world through an artists eyes and that every project deserves professionalism. You showed me that art is not a product but an attitude and for that you will always be my favourite artist.

To my Mom for teaching me how to fight while remaining compassionate. You are a beautiful solder and your love has given me the strength to fight by your side.

Three Caballeros - I toast you both!

I also dedicate this to the professors, instructors and professionals who have supported me in my explorations. Your belief in me will never be forgotten and for coming to my defence when the wolves nipped at my heels - I toast you as well!

Finally for you Liz.

I dedicate this to you, your love and the unending party that is our life!

Cheers my love.

"Champagne for all my real friends and real pain for all my sham friends." I think Francis Bacon said that....

## Acknowledgements

This support document and the *Art Bar* exhibition are the product of the contribution of many special individuals. I would like to thank the following people from the bottom of my heart. Without your support, assistance and faith in me, this document and the *Art Bar* exhibition would not have been possible:

Professor Robert Lederer, Professor Joan Greer, Professor Tim Antoniuk, Chair Betsy Boone, and my patient external Professor Mark Simpson.

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Thank you for believing in me.

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## Introduction

When I began to consider the ways in which I would decode my multiple creative goals and set them out on paper, I was immediately reminded of a Zen Koan I had read early in my creative career. I have always been intrigued by the idea of the Zen Koan and see a parallel between the Koan and the type of conceptual creative work I explore. The goal of a Koan is to challenge a Zen student with a complex riddle that demonstrates a facet of the Buddhist religion. To solve the conundrum the student must deeply consider its meaning and, the hope is, ultimately decipher a message which leads the student to a profound enlightenment. Each facet of a Koan is symbolic and plays on the semiotic significance of the aspects included in the conundrum. The Koan I am referring to reads as follows:

> Hyakujo wished to send a monk to open a new monastery. He told his disciples that whomever answered a question most ably would be appointed. Placing a water vase on the ground, he asked, "Who can say what this is without calling its name?"
> The chief monk said, "No one can call it a wooden shoe."
> Isan, the cooking monk, tipped over the vase with his foot and went out.
> Hyakujo smiled and said, "The chief monk loses." And Isan became the master of the new monastery. (Mascetti, 35)

The lesson in the Koan is that "Truth", which is symbolized by the water vase, cannot either be told or not be told, but only shown. I cannot help but draw a parallel between the Koan and the processes of the conceptual artist or designer, in which a complex visual conundrum is created by way of the work and the viewer of or participants in the work are asked to meditate on its ultimate meaning. In this Koan the vase and the water work in tandem to generate the question and provide the opportunity for realization. In my work the question manifests itself in the shown materiality of the work but also has its genesis in the unique intersection of social situation and action as subject matter. I strive to generate situations in which participants can assume the role of Isan and execute actions that may lead to unique realizations and considerations. The *Art Bar* project generates its conundrum via the channelling of alternate and unknown situations that ultimately build on the semiotics of our material environment. This project aims to generate a process of engagement on multiple levels and ultimately presents itself as vase, water, and question in one holistic package.

I cannot help but question the nature of the water vase in the Zen Koan. What does it look like and what is it made from? Was it hard to tip over or did it all appear effortless? Who was gathered around and were they informed of the situation beforehand? Was it a formal, casual or surreptitious event? I have a million questions pertaining to the situation, the individuals involved, aesthetics, etc. This line of inquiry on my part might appear to some to negate the purity and simplicity of the Koan. I disagree and herein lies the very crux of my work and approach towards my creative projects. If the goal of the Koan or conceptual project is to set about inspiring a deep contemplation, would not all elements that surround that project warrant considerable development in order to increase the potency and relevance of that contemplation? For me, the answer is yes and, in an effort to increase the potency of my conceptual inquiries, I have taken on an extremely diverse and holistic role in the development of my *Art Bar* project.

This approach derives from an awareness of multiple individuals and movements, past and present, that challenge traditional boundaries relating to the disciplines of art and design. In this support document I will outline how this approach is indebted to the history of art and the explorations of individual artists and their related movements. I will look at the birth of the conceptual approach to art initiated by Marcel Duchamp and how explorations by the Fluxus movement, the artist Allan Kaprow, and the movement officially titled Conceptual Art, are related to my work. Subsequently, I will analyze the major inspiration I have gained from the history of design and how pivotal players such as Memphis, Droog Design, and Tobias Wong have pushed the boundaries of the profession and developed a new model to the practice of design. I will also highlight current theoretical explorations that have helped quantify the multiple and often historically divergent influences that have led to my creative methodology. To this end, I will look at Johanna Drucker's book *Sweet Dreams – Contemporary Art and Complicity*, (2005) the recently released *Design and Art* (2007) from MIT Press, and most influential to my practice, Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (2002). I will also briefly touch on the formal aspects that surrounded the execution of my *Art Bar* project as well as some brief conclusions drawn from the project. I will also draw attention to the fact that when looking at the contemporary creative artefact and considering the creative rubric of concept and communication, it is becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate between the disciplines of art and design. *Art Bar* as a project is a demonstration of this fact and illustrates how contemporary creative projects draw from multiple histories and mediums to most clearly communicate conceptual meaning and ultimately engage their participants in a dialogue about the continuing evolution of creative practice.

## Section One – Formal Concerns and Process.

To begin I will quickly outline some of the actual formal and process concerns that affected the creation of the *Art Bar* project as well as some of the execution details of the project itself. (please refer to the set of images beginning with Fig. 32 and ending with Fig. 36). Following this section, I will delve into the theoretical underpinnings of the project and the conceptual ramifications related to it. I will then conclude with some results and future plans for the work.

The actual scale of the *Art Bar* project was very intimidating and there were few opportunities to cut corners. I had to use all of the resources available to me to manifest the project and I am deeply indebted to many supportive parties. The reality was that there were thirteen days to get the actual construction done in addition to conducting interviews (Fig. 30, 31), finalizing poster designs (Fig. 18, 19), working with sponsors, organizing audio/video components, scheduling DJs and pretty much everything else that coincides with a major art exhibition, bar opening and general cultural event. It was extremely daunting and without the stimulants legal under Canadian law, *Art Bar* may have never reached fruition.

The actual design was formalized in the same way that I have approached most of my design work. It began with research and a desire to mix anachronous histories and styles. I have been developing an approach and style for a number of years and at this point feel very confident in my formal interior design expression. From an awareness of what is happening on a global scale as well my experience with the interior aesthetics of Edmonton, Alberta, I believe that what I was planning would be fairly engaging without being so avant-garde that the participants could not make a connection with it. My desire was for something opulent and grand as well as something that did not look like it belonged to our community. To this end, I wanted *Art Bar* to somehow reference European culture and what could be projected as the "coolest" place to be in a city like Paris, Berlin or London. This was intended to transpose the participant to an alternate environment not only outside of what could be expected from the gallery but also the city, province and country.[1] I am very influenced by the concept of anachronistic aesthetics developed in the film Blade Runner. The notion of the megalopolis that mixed neo-classicism, technology, art-deco and urban decay was a post-modern statement way beyond its 1984 release date and was deeply inspiring. My version mixes more of sixsties pop and mod culture into the aesthetic but the motivation was largely the same.

1 At some point in the future I will embark on an academic paper pertaining to the development of an interior design style based on the idea of transposing myself to another location and a mechanism for escape.

Gold was chosen to increase the impression of opulence, as well as the chandeliers and art deco glass lighting. I chose to use the Frank Gehry cloud lights as juxtaposition to the classic lighting and to have a bit of fun with the post-modern implications represented by Gehry's work. These lights are also made of fabric and related to the softer elements like upholstered benches and pillow/lounge areas. Vintage chairs were procured through a sponsorship by the University of Alberta Students Union which also included some tables (I had actually designed the tables for a project for them in the past). The chairs are Arne Jacobson 3107 chairs in Teak reissued from Herman Miller in 1968. They are very well worn and worth a fortune. The last time I saw one for sale in a vintage furniture shop in Toronto; they were selling for three hundred dollars each. The history of these chairs at the University of Alberta is very interesting and they tie in to my education and history. For aesthetic purposes they are currently in style as there is a big resurgence in mid-century modern design. The aged look added a lot to the idea about a false sense of history attatched to *Art Bar* that I wanted to generate which also increased the unsettling nature for people when they saw it for the first time. *Art Bar* looked like it had been there all along but somehow was obviously brand new. The brown tile floor of the gallery was kept and helped add to the false history and anachronous look of *Art Bar*.

Rich walnut veneers were used in the interior of *Art Bar*. Wood arborite paneling was used to refer to wood in areas I could not afford authentic wood. The wood warmed the environment and served the purpose of making it feel very hospitable. An obsession with lighting required I spend a major portion of my budget on the actual implementation of ambient, direct and highly modifiable lighting. All lights were controlled by dimmers and manipulated to create an intensely warm glow in the space that both challenged and invited. I designed backlit areas behind the bench seating and bulkhead that implemented a fluorescent tube covered with a gold colored gel. This was in order to make the vibrant gold paint on the arched ceiling look even more intense. At the entrance, there was a four-by-eight foot sheet of red translucent plexiglass lent to me by Professor Tim Antoniuk that was then back-lit and built into the wall. It lent an extremely "lounge and bar" feeling to the stained oak entrance. This entrance did not allow the participant to see the interior without actually entering the space and also led their sightlines to experience many of the complex curves and

formal elements from certain angles. The ceiling of the entrance was also low so that as you actually walked into the space you felt somewhat overwhelmed by the very high ceiling and different levels of bulkheads. The bulkheads themselves radiused into the wall and flowed to the floor. The gold area was a large arch with alternatively radiused arches that was created to make a more intimate and intense area. The back wall of that area was covered in a very Op-Art and sixsties-style wallpaper. It had the same yellow, black, brown and gold colours that were used in the space. When working with the installer, I realized that if the pattern was slightly adjusted it created a full optical illusion as the eye tried to recognize pattern. The result instils an instantly woozy effect on the viewer that perfectly suited the environment. The pictures will have to speak further to the result of the aesthetics but overall the visual outcome of *Art Bar* was never compromised and ultimately it was manifested exactly how it was envisioned.

The actual construction happened in the 13 days that were available between when the previous exhibition was dismantled and the opening night of *Art Bar*. It is very hard to comprehend that a project of that scale could be manifested in the time frame and I owe an immense amount of gratitude to all the parties involved in its construction. Without their amazing dedication to the project and unending motivation, it would have never even been close to complete. I will let a couple of the pictures outline the process but it first began with the construction of the walls and bulkheads out of steel stud and drywall (Fig. 33). My father and the company he works with did the work. The workmanship was impeccable regardless of the timeline. It was constructed as if it was going to last as long as a real bar and every detail of my original drawings and plans was implemented perfectly. The result was near perfection and it was difficult to let be destroyed in the end. The bar was built by Geoff Lilge and myself and was slightly less perfect than the drywall (Fig. 32). It was built as a real bar but lacked the refinement in areas that could not be seen (which was fine). Chris Smith and an extremely skilled team of millworkers finished it in walnut veneer and black arborite. It looked extremely good and was of a very high professional calibre. Chris and his team also built the entrance and finished the front of the arch area (Fig. 34, 36) Gary Crawford did all of the electric work and installed the lighting. He did an amazing job and was a positive force in the construction of the space. The gallery staff including Gabriella Rosiende also worked on the project and assisted with painting and clean-up (Fig. 35). I also worked with a great design team called the Mustache Press on the creation of my print media such as posters and handbills as well as the design of the *Art Bar* stencil/monogram. (Fig. 17, 18, 19).

Finally, I will discuss the actual budget and support. Many of the people involved were paid by me but I also gained a large amount of sponsorship. The alcohol was sponsored by Heineken Canada, Stolichnaya Vodka and Bombay Sapphire. All beer was provided by Heineken at essentially 50% of cost by Heineken. This was completely procured by me and is part of what I have somewhat outlined in the support document as a holistic approach to my projects. I won't go into detail but there is definitely room for further consideration pertaining to the support of creative projects. Some people were taken aback by my willingness to work with sponsors. My response to that criticism is that none of the sponsors told me how to conduct any of my affairs, and in my goal of authenticity, it does not get any more authentic then beer sponsorship. I also procured sponsorship from many other supportive companies. It was my initiative alone that went after the sponsorship for the project and I spent an immense amount of time making sure everything was going to manifest so the project could be executed. Without the support of these companies and organizations there is no way the project would have come to fruition. I am truly grateful to these companies for their support and their contribution to the project. A list of my sponsor partners and the total value of their sponsorship is outlined in my attached budget outline attached[2]:

2. A complete budget can be found beginning on P. 141.

## Section Two – Art Historical Influences.

I will in the following sections, outline in detail the relationship *Art Bar* has to art and design history as well as contemporary theory. I will begin with the histories of art and design following a chronological order and then proceed to the section on contemporary theory. Because of the difficulty of defining operational categories for the contemporary artist or designer and the fact that there is not yet a good term to qualify their output, I will simply refer to them as "creatives". This term is derived from the business industry to describe the sides of their departments that deal with aesthetic and creative issues. For the purposes of this document, it will be used to allude to the emergent breed of cross-disciplinary professionals who are exploring their work in exciting new ways.

**Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* – Art as Idea**

It is extremely hard to truly evaluate the significance of Duchamp's work to the contemporary practice of artists as well as designers. His influence on contemporary creative practice is staggering. Duchamp's artwork and critical theory has increasingly taken the spotlight in the investigations of contemporary artists, historians and academic researchers. The popularity of his legacy is now at an all time high. Evidence of this was provided at the 2004 Turner Prize exhibition in which 500 artists, critics, curators and art historians voted him the most important artist of the twentieth century, usurping this role from the previous most important artist, Pablo Picasso. Evidence of Duchamp's pervasive theories can be directly seen in the continued exploration by multitudes of artists including those in the Fluxus and conceptualist movements which I will discuss later in this document. Like Duchamp many artists have chosen to engage intellectually with their practice and embrace the development of critical dialogue that analyzes the role of art as it relates to society. However, Duchamp was truly the progenitor of a line of practice that aims to grapple with the Pandora's box of authorship and the relationship of the artist's identity to the artistic product. Duchamp was also the first artist to truly frame the viewer's participation and engagement with the art object as a subject matter for professional artistic practice.

Some of the predominate research into Duchamp such as Dalia Judovitz's book *Unpacking Duchmap: Art in Transit* has placed the emphasis of his importance to art history on his penchant for questioning authorship, exploring art in an intellectual context and his fatherly role to the artistic paradigm of conceptual based work. There is a direct lineage of my current practice that is traceable to Duchamp and the traditionally emphasized questions raised by his most important artistic intervention, the Ready-made. I will briefly discuss the direct correlation between explorations in my work and that of the precedents set by Duchamp's Ready-made. I am interested in Duchamp's questions of authorship, the significance of the artist's hand and resulting dynamic shift to conceptualist work, but I also want to emphasize alternate elements of the Ready-made project that have significantly informed my work as well as others working in a contemporary relational form. This alternate exploration focuses on the ways Duchamp implicated

the viewer's engagement as the active element that would ultimately manifest meaning from his projects. This active awareness of the public's relationship to art would also serve to invite engagement and dialogue mainly about everyday life and the elements that comprise the subjectivity of his audience as a whole. Duchamp's working methodology included many elements not traditionally associated with fine art and, in turn, he raised questions concerning the defining parameters associated with the artist. In my work, I am very motivated by Duchamp's precedents in the framing of the viewer as an active ingredient in the creative process and by his overall development of a new working methodology that was ground breaking.

For clarity, let me focus on one particular Ready-made and Duchamp's best known and most insightful example of the conceptualist theories that have proven to be his legacy. Duchamp's *Fountain*, (Fig. 20) of 1917 serves as a profound example of the power of the artistic intervention that is now so synonymous with conceptually driven projects. The efficiency of *Fountain* is bewildering. In one relatively effortless gesture, Duchamp challenged the value of the constructs and processes of art and all of the ardently fought-over absolutes that had, until then, been baby steps in a slowly evolving modernist theory: a modernist theory that, up to that point, had privileged the mastery of medium and encouraged a religiosity made material by way of the artist's hand. Duchamp proposed to crush the mythologies surrounding the artist's divine touch as it related to the relative value, both monetarily and philosophically, of the products generated by the artist. This was done through layers of complex critique pointed directly at the systems generating value in art and the subjective relationship the artist had to what can only be described as the magic touch. Duchamp's explorations have essentially broken down walls between hierarchical structures in creativity and created a path for creatives like myself to continue to explore the boundaries of creativity. This aspect is deeply important because the critical inquiries and challenges set about by Duchamp are a major factor in the working methodologies of the creatives I will discuss in this document in addition to informing my own explorations.

Duchamp began these critical interventions by removing himself from the equation. Or, at least, removing himself as the traditional artist working in a medium and then presenting a masterpiece for the world to see. Duchamp signed

the urinal "R. Mutt" and, as traditionally deciphered, this pseudonym stands for a number of conceptual puns and allusions. Firstly, "Mutt" is a play on the name of the industrial manufacturer of the urinal: Mott Works. It is apparent that Duchamp wants to bring into question what prerequisites are needed to define someone as an artist. The "R" in the signature is said to stand for "Richard" which, at the time, was a euphemism for "moneybags" or a rich person (Judovitz 35). Here, Duchamp seems to be both critiquing the way value is attached to art and possibly those who consume it. Mutt is also said to be a reference to one half of a bumbling cartoon duo "Mutt and Jeff" (Judovitz 35). This may be a reference to Duchamp himself or possibly another challenge to the value of the signature in that it is referencing something considered base (popular culture). This complicated set of meanings acts as a mechanism with which Duchamp raises the notion of value attached to the artist's signature. As well, Duchamp is playing off quotidian references as a mechanism to create conceptual playfulness. He is manipulating the semiotics attached to these popular culture references in order to invite engagement in a dialogue about meaning. This breach of the quotidian and use of the signifiers of daily life are of substantial importance to my work. The creative construction of common signifiers in new and unexpected ways generates dialogue and inspires intellectual engagement. This type of semiotic reconfiguration is used by myself as well as by all of the creatives that will be mentioned in this document. It is one of the tools now used by creatives to increase the conceptual readings in their work and allow for multiple levels of engagement. This example by Duchamp, though, is truly one of the first and has many valuable points of significance to contemporary conceptual work.

As briefly outlined, the reasons Duchamp did not sign his work with his own name are complex but they start with the idea that Duchamp, as what could previously be defined as a professional artist, does not exist in the work. By this, I mean that he is no longer pedestalizing the convergence of craft and persona but instead proposing the notion that the artist can serve as the vessel in which complex notions travel. The *Fountain* is not about a physicality associated with Duchamp's personal craftsmanship but instead now frames an artistic output that endeavours to aggrandize the questions and ideas that an artist can raise through their work. Duchamp's intervention proposes that there need not be the artist's

handprints spread all over the work for a Conceptual Artwork to have validity and alternately challenges the magnificence of those hand or brush or weld marks. At the time, the *Fountain's* false signature and utilitarian manufacture attempted to deny the typified unique character of the art object and instead forced a critical reassessment of the roles that artists and their products played in relation to their audience.

This alternate authorship suggested by Duchamp manifested itself in the work of many generations to come. It opened the doors for work that can be explored outside medium specificity and also outside the often finite labour skills of the artist themselves. Immediately, what comes to mind is the work of Minimalist (1960s) sculptors like Donald Judd and subsequent continued thematic exploration of this authenticity by way of the process of outsourcing the execution of objects to the industrial manufacturing industry. Or the Factory (late 1970s) where Andy Warhol oversaw the production of paintings, films, books, movies, etc. Or Damien Hirst (early 1990s) who had a cow processed and split in half in an abattoir and encased in an industrially manufactured vitrine. The list could go on, but what is important to emphasize is that *Fountain* opened a door to realize work in a different form than had been traditionally accepted up to that point and in turn, opened a floodgate of opportunity for future generations of artists looking to explore their work outside a limited set of mediums. Duchamp, instead, navigated the creative process in a far more profound way in that he operated as a director of operations for the entirety of the open-ended performance that made up the presentation and discourse surrounding *Fountain*. Duchamp was not only responsible for the creation of the conceptual work *Fountain* but he also manipulated the events surrounding its exhibition. Juan Antonio Ramirez in his book *Duchamp, Love and Death Even*, touches on the precedent set by Duchamp's manipulation of the events surrounding the exhibition of Fountain:

> It is very probable...that Duchamp was thinking of the censure motion passed by the Parisian Independants in 1912 against his Nude Descending a Staircase and somehow wished to repeat the event. If this were the case, then we would have to attribute to him a new technique of Dadaist ancestry: scandal, conceived as a kind of collective work with consciously programmed effects. (Ramirez, 27)

Duchamp purposely made a scene when he was asked to remove *Fountain* from

the show. He wrote a false letter pretending to be outraged by its presence in the show and manipulated multiple other external situations that affected the overall awareness and outcome of the exhibition of the work. What is most important about all the aforementioned facts is that Duchamp effectively blew apart the boundaries of how art could be created, exhibited, and experienced in one efficient gesture. The result was a completely wide-open opportunity for creative exploration that would have, at its core, the desire to create work in new ways, engage with work in new ways, exhibit work in new ways and generally create work that had its genesis in the constant re-evaluation of its own existence.

*Art Bar* looks to the work of Duchamp but is an extreme extension of the precedents he set almost 100 years ago. By most traditional definitions, *Art Bar* could be considered a work of art. Form, material, concept, colour, all come together to make a visual work for an audience to view and ponder. But to suggest this to some still causes issue and that is because it was created in a way that has evolved far beyond the traditional parameters of artistic involvement. However, the reality is that because of Duchamp's focus on the role of the artist and subsequent developments resulting from this, many generations of creatives have been inspired to continue expanding the definitions of the profession. I situate my own creative practice within this tradition and draw influence from Duchamp's challenges to the defining parameters of artistic expression and authorship: I now generate my work under an extremely expanded definition of the term artist or, more accurately, a "creative". Duchamp's challenges to convention and search to explore the borders of meaning as it applied to creativity has opened the door to assuming multiple responsibilities in one creative project. The most appropriate term to qualify this type of role in contemporary terms is the title "art director". In an extension of what Duchamp had begun, my role is often to gather the necessary people to create the project as it is best suited to exist materially. I budget, project manage, schedule, design, and manage as is necessary to ensure successful completion of the project. In this way, I am one of many creatives who have organized their practice after the business models of efficiency typically associated with film, architecture and design. What makes my work and work by others like me challenging is the motivation behind the execution and display of our end projects. In the same way that Duchamp's choice of a urinal is now looked at as a profound work of art because of all it implied, my work looks to challenge, instigate and excite by way

of its conceptual tenants, and in turn, dissolve definition. Conceptual inquiry is my relationship to an artistic canon started by Duchamp, but my projects continue to challenge the defining borders of creative activity and invest efforts to expand these borders.

What is most impressive to me about Duchamp's *Fountain* (other than that it truly signalled the emergence of the conceptual in art) is the complexity of the signifiers that form its matrix. Each carefully chosen aspect of the *Fountain* employs specific references that have semiotic resonance in society. Together these semiotic devices, with their root in the quotidian, form a new language that no longer only speaks of the value and appreciation of the art object as it relates to aesthetics but instead proposes a value based on the consideration of meaning. The consideration of meaning is also somewhat open ended and requires that the viewer engage with the work based on their own subjective histories. Fifty years later, Roland Barthes would define the import of this gesture in his pivotal essay, *The Death of the Author*. Barthes succinctly points out that "To give a text an author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing"(42). To close the meaning of an artwork is to deny the audience of that work their personal and subjective relationship to art. To Duchamp, doing so would be tantamount to asking someone a question and then answering before they had the opportunity to speak. The viewer's opportunity to speak is exactly what had proved so dramatically revolutionary in the proposition posed by *Fountain* and it is most relevant to my work today. The viewer or participant is required to ultimately decide the relevance and meaning of the work. They are given a select number of clues or semiotic qualifiers and then asked to perform in the installation based on their own subjective relationships to it. These subjective relationships encapsulate their engagement with art but also with the proposed environment and, ultimately, with each other. *Art Bar* is a meeting place in which an experimental game in social engagement can be considered by those actually manifesting the performance and ultimately deciding on the value of the experiment. The frame through which you see *Art Bar* is constantly shifting as the users lose themselves in the engagement and are then forced to accept the reality of the art gallery location as they step out of the space. Ultimately, what is asked of the participant is that they address their parameters for artistic or creative definition as well as navigate the semiotic landscape I have created. The value and qualities associated with their experience

are as much or even more a part of *Art Bar* as is the elaborate stage that facilitates it. What I have taken from Duchamp is the desire to challenge my audience or participants to intellectually engage with my project. As an extension of what Duchamp initiated, though, *Art Bar* also frames that intellectual engagement as part of a performance that manifests itself in the social situation. At its core, *Art Bar* is the frame through which experience is seen through and the intellectual engagement with the project is intrinsically tied to physical experience and sociability. I see this engagement as an evolutionary step in what Duchamp had initiated in his critical challenge to the borders of art set about with creation, intellectualization and exhibition of his work *Fountain*.

**Fluxus and the Everyday (General image Fig.21)**

Fluxus, like all art historical movements, was built on the investigations and precedents of other artists and their subsequent movements. Fluxus was a movement of loosely connected individuals that had its birth in 1962 and largely saw its end around 1978 (O. Smith, 2). Fluxus drew inspiration from the explorations of art movements like Surrealism, Futurism and, most importantly, Dada. The most important inspiration for Fluxus was from seminal conceptual hero Marcel Duchamp: the extension of ideas initiated by him is why Fluxus is of particular interest. Fluxus, like many movements, largely defies concrete definition but the underlying tenants of the artists associated with it provide a basis for investigation. My interest in Fluxus has its genesis in the some of the constants in the work of its members. Similarly to Duchamp, their works began with a desire to challenge the status-qou of the fine art canon and generate projects that questioned the traditional role of art in society. The key ways this was explored was by first shifting the focus of their work to the quotidian, and similar to the Ready-made, looking at materials and concepts that were traditionally not valued by the art world. Like the work of Duchamp, their work requested mental and analytical engagement from the viewer, but went further in challenging the viewer to also become a physical participant. Through the exploration of suitable art materials and concepts, the artists of the Fluxus movement also look to challenge convention by way of humour, sarcasm, irony and a general playfulness that the somber appreciation of art was traditionally devoid of.

Drawing inspiration from Duchamp, the Fluxus artists strove to shift the locus of the artwork from a merely visual realm to one of intellectual consideration. In part, their motivation also mirrored that of Duchamp's in that the artists of the Fluxus group felt that the current art world of their time had become corrupt and elitist. Dealing with the specter of Abstract Expressionist theory purported by Greenberg and a subsequent venerability attached to the artists working in that style, Fluxus chose to make work that embraced the quotidian as a mechanism to demystify the art object. Hanna Higgins, in her book *Fluxus Experience*, speaks about the relationship of Fluxus to the everyday and the art environment of their time:

> Fluxkits and Events make ordinary reality special as occasions and as objects both in- and outside the aesthetic situations called art. Even though these works occasionally function as art in a relatively traditional sense (they are shown in museums and performed in concert halls), Fluxus artists in New York, working in an art context that privileged painterly abstraction, clearly yearned for something else. Rather than convey their own emotional world abstractly, Fluxus artists directed their audiences' attention to concrete everyday stuff...(Higgins, 74)

The use of non-art or everyday materials was employed in a similar fashion to that of the Ready-made, in which the artist questions the very nature of how art was deemed valuable in society by presenting the viewer with an object devoid of traditional aesthetic value. The Fluxus objects were actually constructed to look like everyday objects as opposed to previously existing as one, which demonstrated a definitive evolution of the concept of the Ready-made. This is a dramatic step in the development of the conceptually imbued art object and has its genesis in the professional history of the Fluxus founder, George Maciunas, who had worked as a graphic designer and was familiar with the creation of objects and media for mass production and consumption. Maciunas realized that the conceptual relevance of a work could be amplified by using design elements that could communicate to a broad audience and that already carried significant semiotic histories. Designed objects convey their meaning through a complex relationship between typography, form, material, image and context. This complicated language is easily readable by virtually all members of society who are accustomed to engaging with mass produced products often marketed alongside those of competitors. This language has developed as a way to more expediently entice a viewer to engage with the product and ultimately purchase it. Like Duchamp's complexly layered R. Mutt signature, the Fluxus artists, and largely Maciunas, manipulated and subverted this language in order to convey alternate readings of the works they were presenting. Maciunas was often responsible for designing the labels for the products they were sending to galleries and art patrons. He took this opportunity to emphasize the conceptual critique inherent in the work. An example, *Flux Clippings* by Ken Friedman (Fig. 22), consists of random clippings of bunions, calluses, etc.; the label designed by Maciunas uses a woodblock print of a beheading. This label and the artworks itself is making a statement on the notion of production as it relates to the output of the artist. The work is an affront to the traditional value, both monetary

and spiritual, attached to the output of an artist. To emphasize this critique, Maciunas juxtaposes a historic woodblock print of beheading as a mechanism to subvert the banal and ubiquitous clippings. The label and box themselves work within the confines of traditional market products such as paperclips or tacks but through image and content, point to deeper levels of consideration. The label image is emblematic of the anarchic sentiment being proposed by the Fluxus work and demonstrates the challenge to conventional art that is inherent in the work.

The art products generated from the Fluxus group were largely successful in their challenge to the art conventions of the day. The work of the Fluxus movement specifically used everyday objects and design to attack the notion of the rarefied art object. This was a definitive breach with historical art representation and what is of particular interest to me is the Fluxus movement's extrapolation of the use of the everyday or Ready-made initiated by Duchamp. Fluxus manipulated the everyday object and the semiotic significance of that object both in the tangible world and the intangible psychological world. They used the meanings attached to the everyday to allude to their conceptual inquiries. Instead of just reframing the existing utilitarian object in the manner of the Ready-made, they generated new objects that could mirror everyday objects in society but have a more significant conceptual impact. Each element of the new object was a considered mechanism used to increase the impact of the work and communicate that impact to a larger audience. This notion of public inclusion is also a direct affront to the traditionally elitist art world but I will not go into detail about that now. My work draws inspiration from Fluxus in that it is again an extrapolation on the theme of the everyday in art and leads to my exploration of the ambiguous relationship my work has to both art and design.

Similar to the work of the Fluxus artists, *Art Bar* posed a challenge to the parameters of definition for creative expression and generated a dialogue pertaining to the value of creativity in society and the role art and design can play in the encouragement of conceptual inquiries. Like Fluxus, *Art Bar* draws on the everyday to provide the semiotic clues to a conceptual inquiry. I have approached *Art Bar* in a very similar way as Maciunas in that I have looked to provide common signifiers and a situation that society has some established operational rules for. Functionally, the space has an entrance, signs, seating, a bar, lighting, and all the

other utilitarian elements that are used to manifest an interior environment. The codes of conduct are all alluded to and the viewer can instantly understand the parameters of the space. *Art Bar* is similar to a Fluxus work in that it is also an expanded Ready-made. It is an existent and well-understood tenant of design and brings with it the elements associated to real life and the quotidian. It is also a play off of the existent model or type in that it has been specifically created to serve my conceptual aims. Like *Flux Clippings, Art Bar* plays off of the expectations inherent in the space and expands meanings because of its location and conceptual mechanisms. What the *Art Bar* aimed to do both on the opening night and in its day-to-day exhibit was unsettle expectations and instantly familiarize and un-familiarize the participant. *Art Bar* invites multiple levels of participation and the depth to which the participant engages is a personal choice. The fact is that on a fundamental level virtually any adult brings with them the ability to operate within the *Art Bar* installation, but what is challenging is the elements that unsettle its utilitarian nature. The notion of the bar is simultaneously considered lowbrow or base while alternately being glamorous and alluring. The assisted Ready-made design of *Art Bar* accentuates this duality and uses visual codes from the everyday to allude to this. To be succinct, what I have done is take a space that has its basis in the quotidian and place it under the magnifying glass. This transposition includes all the mythology, semiotic significance and complexities of the tangible space but also is an aggrandized mythology of such a space. The greatest complexity of the *Art Bar* installation lay in the metaphor of the microscope itself. In *Art Bar* you are at the same time the observer and the participant. How an individual experiences the project is conceptually the art work's crux. I have been motivated by the exploration into design and the everyday by Fluxus which has opened doors and provided historical reference for the type of creative projects I am exploring. Fluxus members' early forays into design and the everyday have provided the building blocks for a more complicated exploration of design, art and the everyday.

I will take this opportunity to touch on an issue that I feel is very important to the *Art Bar* project and one that relates to the aesthetic value associated to my project. While the projects of Duchamp, Fluxus and the later Conceptual Artists have been pivotal in the development of a new type of creative project they also have what I feel is a fundamental flaw. Visual appeal is all but devoid in the majority of the art objects produced by these progenitors. The rigid and

dull aesthetic of these artists' works has its root in the desire to be art in active resistance. The issue here lies in the ardent opposition proposed by the Fluxus conceptual object to that of the notion of beauty or mystification which was purported by most of the fine arts establishment. In order to be effective conceptually, most artists felt they needed to make their work less visually appealing and, in fact, base in an effort to emphasize the theory surrounding it. This, by way of evolution, is now being proven untrue and this issue has arguably resulted in the lack of recognition for the Fluxus artists. *Art Bar* embraced aesthetics as an integral part of its contemporary conceptual significance. Historically it was often expected that conceptual projects would employ codes of negated aesthetics to increase the resonance of the message. This avenue of exploration is no longer necessary. I am interested in the competent manipulation of the aspects of aesthetics and conceptual significance to create a more contemporary project. Aesthetics and concept are not mutually exclusive and both are now at the service of the other. *Art Bar* is created as a warm, opulent, and well-designed environment because that is what best serves my conceptual purpose. It works conceptually because it is also beautiful. It includes the mastery of both concept and form and I synthesize the two in order to more powerfully express my goals as a creative. For *Art Bar* to function, it was necessary to not immediately divulge its purpose as a conceptual art project. The concrete elements of *Art Bar* want to be a bar, or at least an elaborate stage that, like a movie set, is seamlessly a bar. If it were different and the visual signifiers alerted everyone to the fact it was art, then the part of the project that was art, mainly the participant's experience, would be gone. If this project looked like art, it would specifically put you on one end of the microscope or on the viewer side of the frame. In this project, and most of my work, what is valuable is the ambiguous relationship that the viewer has to the project itself. When a participant becomes aware that they do not understand what they are experiencing, they are forced to adapt and develop new behaviors to deal with the situation. Awareness, consideration, dialogue and the experience of something new are, to my understanding, four of the most sought-after goals for both artists and designers. I share those goals and, to that end, aim to challenge my participants to experience my work in what ways they can. That unique experience is what becomes the very essence of the work. To summarize, I want to say that my work does not immediately present itself as a work of art because the art element of my work largely lacks an aesthetic. I am interested in art as experience and will

generate the aesthetics of my projects to best suit the genesis of experience. My work could look specifically hand done, like the stencil in *Art Bar* (Fig. 2,17) that showed its execution by way of the overspray from the paint cans. Or it could be industrially manufactured designer lighting like the Frank Gehry lights (Fig. 2, 3). For a contemporary artistic object to succeed, it no longer has to expose itself as art and this notion is an evolution of the Fluxus exploration into the everyday.

Integration into the everyday experience is one of the most successful aspects of the Fluxus oeuvre. Fluxus works challenged the viewer to not only engage with the artwork on the visual and intellectual level, as Duchamp's framed Ready-made did, but also on a tactile and visceral level. An example is the 1964 *Fluxkit* by George Maciunas (Fig. 22-1) which requires that the objects be taken out and handled and, in turn, invites an increased engagement with the viewer of the object. This was part of Maciunas' goal to decentralize the art object and implies that the audience ultimately provides the meaning of the art object. The premise of *Art Bar* mirrors this desire and ultimately strives to frame this concept in a more concrete way. The simple notion of challenging a viewing audience to become the participant deconstructs the invisible barrier between art and life. *Art Bar* aimed to prove that it was possible that the art participant can actively become a part of the artwork and their engagement with the work becomes a holistic experience in which their interaction incontrovertibly generates its meaning. Hannah Higgins quotes the American philosopher John Dewey in order to reflect on how Fluxus attempted to generate a similar experience in their work:

> In art as an experience, actuality and possibility or ideality, the new and the old, objective material and personal response, the individual and the universal, surface and depth, sense and meaning, are integrated in an experience in which they are all transfigured from the significance that belongs to them when isolated in reflection. (qtd. in Higgins, 36)

The Dewey quote is used by Higgins to elaborate on the complexity of the Fluxus object in which significance is created through a holistic real experience, not a synthetic one. Fluxus artwork was pivotal in making a new type of work that was no longer about a sensation but was now a sensation unto itself. This exploration by Fluxus has greatly informed my investigations with *Art Bar*. Fluxus work looked to break down notions of experience in art and challenge primary experience, being the thing itself, and the idea or intellectual precept of the thing to become unified.

Fluxus built on the explorations that were begun with the Ready-made but looked to take the ideas further and address the necessity of the pedestal. Even though the Ready-made is an object familiar to the viewer and the viewer can identify with all of its tactile qualities, they were not necessarily invited to handle it. The pedestal or frame was necessary for Duchamp's challenge of artistic conventions to be realized. Alternatively, the Fluxus object invites interaction and constructs a dual function as both intellectual and tactile object, which requires physical engagement from the viewer, now object participant, in order to function as art. *Art Bar* extends that inquiry in that it reduces the clues that qualify it as art and in turn challenges the viewer to define it through their experience and engagement. The true frame lay in the fact it was located inside of the Art Gallery of Alberta and hence it should be recognized as art. However, the ambiguity of its function as social utilitarian space and art performance complicates the relationship and pertinently requests a reassessment of the definitions of art and life. The true frame is in the eye of the participant and the depth to which they are comfortable venturing into it's conceptual framework. Ultimately, *Art Bar* can function as a tangible everyday object or a conceptual stage in which to carry out and ponder the complexities of experience as art.

The most important aspect of the Fluxus group as they directly relate to my work lay in their continued exploration of concepts generated by Duchamp that emphasized viewer engagement and perspective. Their work had used the quotidian to ask questions about the role of art in society and the relationship that a participant with an art object should have. The Fluxus relationship to design granted an avenue of exploration that further looked at the notion of the Ready-made and how objects in society carry a complex series of semiotic meanings that can then be manipulated for conceptual art aims. These objects, in turn, require and invite engagement in order for their value as an art object to be equated. With *Art Bar,* many of my explorations drew from this history but attempted to go further and truly frame the participant as the important factor in the project.

**Kaprow and *The Happenings* (Fig. 23)**

In the 1960s, notions of participatory artwork, embracing the quotidian and the use of everyday objects and experiences to generate new art projects came to the forefront and are emblematic of a time of great artistic experimentation. Movements like Fluxus, Pop Art, Minimal Art and many others saw formative development during that decade. In order to focus on specific issues pertaining to the exploration of performance and audience participation that are relevant to my research, I have chosen to briefly look at the work of Allan Kaprow. Kaprow is probably most well known for his development and subsequent coining of the term, *Happenings*. *Happenings,* as described in the introduction to Kaprow's book: *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life (62)*, are:

> Late-fifties art form in which all manner of materials, colors, sounds, odors, and common objects and events were orchestrated in ways that approximated the spectacle of modern everyday life. (Kaprow, 62)

Kaprow's work evolved from the modernist exploration of collage which greatly informed the decisions made by him in the development of the *Happenings*. Firstly, the notion of generating an artwork from disparate elements that had their initial genesis as everyday objects was introduced. Kaprow's early *Happenings* were often generated by combining everyday materials and actions that were then orchestrated to create something new. The notion of orchestration or fixed direction also has its basis in the relationship to collage in that although each piece in a collage may be derived from random sources, the placement and arrangment of the pieces are always chosen through the artistic lens. Kaprow's early *Happenings* were very tightly scripted events that employed individuals as well as the artist as performers. These performers would carry out an organized series of actions that were then viewed by a small audience. Although these first steps in the development of Karprow's *Happenings* were a radical exploration into the nature of art and its relationship to performance, they did not emphatically challenge the traditional relationship of art object and viewer. Later, in the continued development of Kaprow's work, he began to further emphasize the import of the audience in the execution of the work. More accurately, his work strove to completely eliminate the very notion of audience or viewer and instead investigated the role of the art patron as participant and co-conspirator. To this end, Kaprow

began to create works that could only be viewed or engaged with if you became a contributing member to the overall performance. Adrian Henri describes this approach in the book *Environments and Happenings*:

> The audience consists of the performers; he has moved from ritualized theatre-pieces for a static audience to group rituals, performed mainly in an outdoor environment. (Henri, 94)

In these works, there was no audience or viewer but only participation and engagement by the members involved in its execution. Kaprow cites the predictability of audience reaction as part of the motivation for this but, more importantly, emphasizes the notion of intellectual engagement being facilitated through physical engagement:

> The fine arts traditionally demand for their appreciation physically passive observers, working with their minds to get at what their senses register. But the Happenings are an active art, requiring that creation and realization, artwork and appreciator, artwork and life be inseparable. (Kaprow, 64)

Although Kaprow has multiple motivating factors behind the genesis and development of the *Happenings*, it is this statement which most clearly demonstrates the ultimate goal of his work. Kaprow was adamant in creating a holistic art experience that required not only mental but also physical engagement to construct value and generate meaning. This inclusive work required no professional training of the participants and aggrandized their honest and unrehearsed reactions. The concept that an untrained audience performs the requisite actions that would generate the work ardently challenges traditional ivory tower notions of the artist as master of craft. It also challenges the existential channel by which the average spectator can see beyond the materiality of the artwork. In this way, Kaprow is continuing the investigations of the role of the artist and artwork in society taken up by Duchamp. Like Duchamp, Kaprow again proposes the notion that the true value of an artwork resides not in the dictation of elements such as craft, intellect or mythology, but in how an artwork engages with society. The search for an artistic experience that is not fortified by exclusivity is the underlying tenant to the challenging works created by Kaprow.

*Art Bar* is informed by the notion of the *Happenings* but strives to extend the ideas generated by Kaprow. The concept of viewer action being the basis of the art project has its definitive birth with the work of Kaprow. As I outlined earlier, the focus of *Art Bar* was to allow the users to generate meaning in the performance and analyze their own relationship to art, life and the established definitions of the two. I approached this in an exacting way that strove to expose the least amount of "art" qualifiers that would in turn affect the participant's engagement with and perception of the work. This issue presents what I feel was somewhat of a weakness in Kaprow's early *Happening*-based work and in his overall plan. Historically in Kaprow's *Happenings,* the audience was invited to cross through a traditional barrier defined by the "red rope" but then Kaprow gave them another explicit set of rules which they had to abide by. The scripts of Kaprow's and other *Happenings* and events limits the audience's own subjective relationship to the project. Although there are avenues for chance and character inflections, the scripts conflicted with the natural engagement of participants and denied the honesty in action that Kaprow strove for. It would seem that as Kaprow endeavored to negate the context of the gallery, he regenerated it in an alternate way with his scripts. The actions carried out by the participants were, in essence, a continuation of the traditional relationship presupposed by the art space. These actions needed to be liberated further too truly facilitate the natural genesis of human interaction. The spurious meanings attached to the actions in the *Happenings* could also leave the participants bewildered. It would appear that the meanings behind the event were often the exclusive property of the artist and because the events were often taking place in multiple locations at the same time, the participants could not actually construct meaning because they lacked inclusion in the overall design. Although they were often provided with the overall script, they were still performing a vision predisposed to a genesis in the artist's mind. The directions provided were not as liberating as proposed at the time and preset the actual participation level of the individuals involved. They were, in fact, a conscious direction by the artist, maybe equal to an artist statement, that requests participation by way of a certain subjective perspective. With *Art Bar,* I specifically decided to not give a didactic panel defining engagement with my project. Whether it is the participatory opening night engagement or the operational engagement that replayed the events of the opening, the participants were given nothing to define their action in the space. This is unsettling for some, boring for others and invigorating for most.

The *Happenings*, like many sixties creative explorations, were based on notions of challenge and negation. These early forays into audience participation were invaluable to the birth of multiple art forms such as performance and installation art and have to be viewed as a profound step towards shedding constraints of creative investigation. However, they were also one side of an argument that established itself by extremes. Like later conceptualist movements and Fluxus, the *Happenings* suffered from the denial of aesthetic qualities and most of the tenants that were previously looked upon as art stipulations. In contemporary context, the necessity to argue these points through predictable extremes appears somewhat unnecessary, but what informs my explorations is the lineage of questioning proposed by works like Kaprow's. How can art maintain an inclusive practice that, in turn, challenges society to reaffirm the value of creative exploration and the propensity for development of dialogue through challenging expected notions of representation and experience? These are the goals of *Art Bar* and questions I continually explore in my work. It is of value to consider the pivotal history associated with the *Happenings* but to also look to expand upon the concept in the same way that my creative predecessors did.

**Conceptual Art – The Four Defining Factors**

When considering the historical art impetus behind all of my work and, in particular, *Art Bar*, it is impossible to deny the import of the movement labelled "conceptual art". Largely, the histories I have already outlined culminate in this movement and it is here that the aforementioned theories become more solidified. The complexity of my relationship to this movement cannot be fully explored in this document nor will the history of this movement be served its due in the few short paragraphs I can afford it. Regardless, I will outline what I feel are some of the most important tenants of conceptual art as they relate to *Art Bar*.

Conceptual art owes its creation to the critical approaches of many others and, in particular, the sentiment of sixties radicalism. The impact of Duchamp's philosophies became more prevalent in the explorations of the sixties artists. At the time, much of the artwork began to steadily shift from the direction of a purely visual art to one that increasingly challenged the viewer to participate directly in how the work was evaluated. Critical writing began to seriously challenge the proclamations espoused by the theoreticians of the modernist hegemony like Clement Greenberg, and new theories began to redefine what, how and why something becomes art. Conceptual art evolved from this challenge to convention. The conceptual art movement is loosely dated between the years of 1966 – 1977 (Godfrey, 4) although, as I have been describing, it also existed in one form or another through out the 20th century and into the 21st. As a movement, the term conceptual art describes a paradigm shift in the work of the artists of the period it was manifested in. Ideas that are being loosely explored previously by many individuals and artistic movements found their ultimate manifestation, theoretical foundations and inevitable canonization by way of the conceptual art movement.

Conceptual art as a generalized movement, was driven to move away from the focus on pure aesthetics, championed by the modernist theoreticians like Fried and Greenberg and instead began to focus on the notion of ideas as art. Conceptual art was a critical movement and much of the impetus behind the execution of the movements projects began with an inquiry into the previous explorations and mechanisms of the art world itself. The artists of the movement also turned their backs on the traditional role of the artist as supreme craftsman

adept at manipulating form, composition and material, but alternately began to employ these methods to illustrate an idea. Alexandro Alberro writes in his essay *Reconsidering Conceptual Art*, 1966-1977, that conceptual art is defined by a series of four exploratory trajectories:

> In its broadest possible definition, then, the conceptual in art means an expanded critique of the cohesiveness and materiality of the art object, a growing wariness toward definitions of artistic practice as purely visual, a fusion of the work with its site and context of display, and an increased emphasis on the possibilities of publicness and distribution. (Alberro, xvii)

I will employ these four definitions to briefly touch on the relevant interventions posed by the conceptual artist school. These definitions will also aid in briefly outlining my relationship to the conceptual art movement and the way in which the work represented in the *Art Bar* project is indebted to the precedents set by the movement. I will use one conceptual art example to aid in my outline of these four points. One of the most intriguing projects and one that is particularly relevant to *Art Bar* is Robert Barry's *Closed Gallery* piece in which he sent out invitations and posted a note on the gallery door announcing that the "gallery will be closed for the duration the exhibition." And the gallery was.

**Cohesiveness and Materiality**

The first point to be examined is that of cohesiveness and materiality in Barry's work and subsequently in *Art Bar*. Conceptual art continually posed the question as to what the "product" of art is. Traditionally, we would expect to see a tangible manifestation of the artist's output: a metal or marble sculpture, oil paint on board, a stainless steel box or something else material. Instead, like Duchamp, Barry's work has pointed to an analysis of the output of the artist and how that output is valued. What, in effect, did Barry create and how do you define the product, exhibition or sale of such a work? Many conceptual artists created work in this vein and began to critically dissect what the true output of the artist was and what defined someone's role as an artist. The output of Barry's work is an intervention that points to a grander theme that in turn requires audience involvement to qualify. There is no true answer to the conundrum, but this work functions more as a request for consideration than as a decree of something true or untrue.

The notion of questing by way of immateriality also motivates many of my explorations. *Art Bar* poses a number of questions about what and how an artist contributes to the tangible world. Was *Art Bar* a tangible object that represented the output of the artist's hand? The answer is a definitive "maybe". From one perspective, I did create *Art Bar* as a tangible and possibly even sculptural manifestation of craft. I designed it to the utmost of my ability and even helped build some of the interior fittings. But I also paid professionals to build it and relied on their expertise to make it a reality which is a common practice for designers. So, to some degree, it could be argued from a traditional art perspective that I did not build it and my output as an artist is negligible if any. However, there is also the intangible output of an artist which is the creation of an idea and which is often referenced in Barry's work and many other conceptual works. Conceptual art solidified the notion that ideas are also art and that regardless of how something becomes material or not material, the idea is the output of the artist. So, in those terms, the idea behind *Art Bar* is my output as an artist. But I feel my contribution and the contribution of the conceptual artist goes further than that. I suggest my output is the situation that was generated and the feelings, dialogue, confusion,

mythology, interest and all other relationships that the participants and viewers felt from experiencing the project. Like the *Closed Gallery* piece, *Art Bar* is essentially a complex series of questions, not posed to find a definitive answer but instead to engage participants and, in turn, others in a dialogue about creativity. *Art Bar* was not immaterial in the traditional conceptual art sense but because of its assimilation into the everyday and cohesively realistic execution, it is somewhat invisible as art. The complexity of immateriality becomes obvious here and the confusion is increased by the exacting formal execution of *Art Bar*. Is it is grandiose advertisement for a bar designer as it was rumoured to be critically framed? *Art Bar*, to some, is invisible as art and, like Barry's work, that is where the value in the question is most potent.[3] I see the complex ambiguity of *Art Bar* as a direct descendant of work like the *Closed Gallery* piece where the retention of simplicity of concept points to an immutable complexity of questions.

3. See blog on page 90.

**More Than Visual**

The *Closed Gallery* work, as briefly touched on already, focused on the idea of artwork becoming less visual or pointing to value in work that stood outside the realm of aesthetics. To this end, much of the work of the conceptual school has a very dry, even non-existent aesthetic. Immateriality played into the production of the artists but often when work was produced it verged on the clinical. As already briefly outlined, this was due to the work of the conceptual art movement being generated from a critical and oppositional perspective and their general desire to create work that was an affront to the current expectations and definitions of art. From the colourful work of the abstract expressionists or the impressionists, to painted steel sculptures or even vibrant pop art, the value associated to artwork traditionally related to how it looked. In an attempt to challenge that and point to other alternative values in art, the conceptual artists developed their work under the guise of an anti-aesthetic mandate that generally resulted in clinical-looking works. Many of their projects used didactic panels to increase meaning and allude to museum displays.[4] Although the work may have been ripe with intriguing questions, it was often hard to engage with because of the sterility of the visual representation of the concepts. This is arguably the largest detractor from the conceptualist agenda and may have effected overall engagement with the movement from a broader cross section of the public.

The look of *Art Bar* on initial viewing is the complete opposite of the traditionally reserved expression or sterility of a conceptual art project. *Art Bar* is directly juxtaposed to the stark and traditionally neutral presence represented by the brutalist architecture of the Art Gallery of Alberta. *Art Bar* is opulent, warm and dimly-lit featuring vibrant wall coverings and chandeliers. The grandiose nature of *Art Bar* and the virtually inseparable from the real-life nature of the project appears to distance it from the realms of an art project. But the reasons for this aesthetic opulence and proximity to reality are fundamental to some very important conceptual ramifications in my work. Most important in this respect is the premise that conceptual art and aesthetic interest are mutually exclusive. *Art Bar* does not employ the traditional signifiers that connote art or the mechanisms to reinforce the project's historical alignment to the conceptualist school. I view my work as a

4 Museology is an important aspect of *Art Bar* but will have to be investigated in future writings.

logical outcome of the principals that began with conceptual art but not as a direct product of it. As well, my conceptual aim is to focus attention on experience and user-generated value and to immediately expose the project as a work of "art" would negate the honest interaction and experience of the user. To expose the work as art is to provide a frame in which to view the work, and like Kaprow's red rope, it essentially forces the participants to experience *Art Bar* on either an aesthetic or conceptual level and never both. The aesthetic in *Art Bar* served a conceptual propose in that it transposed the participants to a realistic environment outside of their expectations of a gallery setting. Essentially, the space was not supposed to belong to the gallery; and it was the property of myth, mystery, nostalgia or other experiences outside the rule-regulated environment of the gallery. The codes of conduct allotted the space of the gallery and bar were juxtaposed by way of their proximity and these juxtaposed aesthetics were the key to the challenge to define the project as art, reality or both. My relationship to the conceptualist challenges of my predecessors is a close one in that my work looks to expand the defining parameters of art, and more importantly, ways in which to view the world we live in. However, my methodology largely lacks definition in terms of discipline or school and while I look to break down borders, I also strive to offer something new to fill the void that was created. One of my previous art instructors, Professor John Freeman, made an insightful comment about the project. He mentioned that *Art Bar* followed in the lineage of exploration set about by the deconstructionist inquiries initiated by the Conceptual Art school but, opposed to being deconstructed, my work was emphatically constructed. *Art Bar* aims to critically challenge the status-qou of creative expression, value and impact on society while at the same time providing the participants an opportunity to equate its value and define their relationship to creativity.

**Site and Display**

The questions posed with the *Closed Gallery* exhibition are challenging but also indicative of the conceptual artists' explorations of the site and context of art display. The *Closed Gallery* is a site-focused intervention that, at the time, would not normally function as a work of art. However, emblematic of the conceptualist exploration and questing strategy, this exhibition functions as a complex inquiry into the art experience in numerous ways. Relevant to this section is the way the work poses an explicit challenge to the specific site of display normally associated to the viewing of art. The arena of the gallery is the home for traditional art viewing and for the previously understood art/object versus viewer/participant relationship. This work bluntly intervenes in that relationship by negating the operation of the gallery and excluding its patrons from the familiarity of the gallery setting. When the traditional function of the gallery is muted, the rules of engagement and the significance of the space in relation to art and viewer are aggrandized. By closing the space, the patrons are challenged to become aware of the previously unspoken relationship between their engagement with the art object and rule regulated environment of the gallery. The exhibition plays off of, or at least points to, an understanding that because a work is shown in a gallery it has to be contextualized as art and thus requires critical inquiry into its meaning. This intervention has a significant influence on the later generations of artists dealing specifically with site-specific or installation-based works. In addition, this work is completely audience specific and pointedly addresses the notion of viewer participation; specifically, in this case, by altering the expected parameters of interaction the viewer is permitted to have. This work explicitly manipulates the typified norms associated to the viewing and participation with an artwork. This is in direct counterpoint to the modernist ideals projected by Greenberg in which the autonomy of the art object must be absolute and the relationship to the viewer a mere by-product of the completeness of a modernist artwork. This work is specifically now about the viewer and, because of its lack of materiality, frames the relationships that exist between artist, viewer, site, context and convention. As the object disappears, all that can remain are these relationships and a dialogue about personal experience and meaning as raised by the artist.

I have already discussed how the major theme of *Art Bar* was the experience of the participants and how they equated that experience to their views on art. I have also outlined how the authenticity of the bar environment was used to increase the realism of the experience of the patrons and how it was intended to not exclusively give away its relationship to the art project. The context of display in this case was a major contributor to the equation of *Art Bar* to a work of art. I felt the only frame truly necessary was the fact that the work was displayed in the exhibition space of a major public art gallery. This in itself should provide enough of an entry point for reflection on *Art Bar* as an art project. *Art Bar* manipulates the ambiguity of the contemporary context of the project though as many galleries are opening stores, restaurants and bars to entertain patrons and generate allure for the gallery experience. This context required deeper insight for many of the patrons of *Art Bar* and generally inspired questioning and dialogue generated by this ambiguity.

There are also other fundamental points to make about the critical positioning of *Art Bar*. *Art Bar* definitely has its initial genesis in confrontation with the establishment and traditions of the gallery as well as an often presumed elitist history associated to the viewing and participation in art. There is an element of playfulness to the *Art Bar* project that is indicative of my explorations and desire to generate intrigue. How often is it said that the best thing about an opening is the socializing, food, drink and experience of the gathering which is precipitated by an art exhibition? *Art Bar* greatly aggrandized that experience in two important ways. Firstly, the opening night was an extravagant affair with DJs, cheap premium beers, dancing, indulgence and a record-breaking crowd that was extremely eclectic (Fig. 15, 16, 37). It was the ultimate opening with everyone letting their hair down and engaging in revelry and debate. This opening was a self-fulfilling prophecy as the *Art Bar* was partially about the level of engagement normally attributed to art and the battle between the lowbrow and highbrow natures of an opening night experience. It was extreme in its manifestation and the framing of experience as it relates to art. In the ultimate expression of complicity, *Art Bar* critically challenged and appropriated the gallery in an effort to be both shallow and complex, depending on how you wished to engage with it.

Then there is the way that *Art Bar* operated during regular gallery hours. The soundtrack of the opening night was exactingly recorded with microphones set up at multiple tables and also one that I wore for the majority of the evening. These microphones captured the ambient crowd and music but also details of conversations shared by patrons and myself. These were mixed in to the overall soundtrack which was then replayed in the space along side a projected visual from one of the two video camera's that had recorded the opening evening. This soundtrack and video was then played during normal operational hours at the gallery (Fig. 8, 9, 14). The soundtrack is played loudly and the camera images are projected on the outside of *Art Bar* on two flat screen TVs. The effect is that you see a room full of people while also hearing the sounds of a full scale opening party. Anticipation and trepidation quickly fill the patrons who are experiencing the exhibition for the first time as they cannot see the interior of the *Art Bar* space until they make their way through the elongated entrance. When they arrive inside they are met with an empty bar, lit for patrons who have already come and gone. This experience asks the patron to consider how they felt moments ago as they prepared to shift their operational modes from that of a serene gallery to that of an intense party and social setting. Patrons have dealt with this aspect differently but many often taken by surprise by the shift in expectations. I have had a number of people express great longing and disappointment because they realized that the atmosphere they were anticipating engaging with had already slipped into mythology (Fig. 9). That was a major goal of the *Art Bar* exhibition. Inclusion or exclusion in a situation and experience that may or may not prove to be legendary is deeply moving. It is what much artwork tries to make manifest in a spurious way and is part of the mystery and allure of cultural experience.

Growing up in an isolated northern Canadian city, I have continually felt a longing for inclusion. Part of my own survival was to imagine the participation in the cultural events that I felt were the most relevant to my interests. This is also now part of our culture as reality shows based on inclusive opportunity make the unattainable appear real. The ghostly empty stage of *Art Bar* that patrons experience during operational hours alludes to the nostalgic longing for something that was, but in an expedited manner. *Art Bar* was extended too long by the gallery and would have served this conceptual impetus better with an earlier closing date.

It was a victim of its own mythology and struggle for emotional space amongst the passing dreams of each of its participants. This part of *Art Bar* is about the frame in which the participants see their inclusion in the world and how that frame often represents the struggle for relevance in their own experiences and memories. *Art Bar* is a soundtrack and a visual to an experience and, as an empty stage, it is largely a reliquary harbouring artefacts of experience that allude to nostalgia and loss. In this iteration, *Art Bar* is the closest to functioning as a traditional Conceptual Artwork and my personal position in relation to the project is the most expressionistic.

**The Public Distribution**

Lastly, the *Closed Gallery* exhibition represents a goal of conceptual art to pointedly breach the notion of exclusivity often historically associated to the art world. As mentioned, artists like Duchamp and movements like Fluxus had also strove to challenge this historical convention and break down barriers that separated the public from true participation in art. Conceptual art projects like the *Closed Gallery* piece endeavour to highlight the inclusion of the traditionally non-art patron in the construction of meaning. Many projects ask for feedback from the audience in directed manners such as surveys or voting processes. Many of the conceptual artists spoke out against exclusivity and attempted to make their work more inclusive. Unfortunately, the work of the conceptualist school did more to alienate the art audience both highbrow and lowbrow than it did to include them in the dialogue about the work. Often, conceptual art projects required the patron have an extensive knowledge of art history or formal education in some aesthetics-related field. Conceptual art was made by artists largely for artists and, by default, historians, critics, etc. The public was often excluded from the critical dialogue of the work and without the inclusion of decisive visuals for them to hang onto, interest in the movement generally stayed within an intellectual elite. This was a decisive factor in the eventual shift away from Conceptual Art and played a major part in the popularity of the expressionist revival of early eighties painters like Julian Schnabel or Jean-Michael Basquiat.

The visual identity of conceptual art dictated the level on which the work was to be participated with. This dictation, by way of aesthetics, effectively closed the door to multiple levels of engagement and true audience participation. In the same way that the scripts of Kaprow's *Happenings* negated honest involvement by participants, the limiting nature of conceptual art truly controlled the engagement of the public. *Art Bar* strove to provide multiple levels of engagement by the participants of the work and left as much as possible up to the participant's instincts and depth of knowledge. I joked multiple times that if a person was not interested in my show, they could at least have inexpensive quality drink which is more than they may get out of some exhibitions. *Art Bar* exists on multiple levels and the engagement is largely up to the participant and the depths to which they want to explore the work.

I was also informed by the movement of the Young British Artists who were most prevalent with their work in the nineties. Through my research into their

projects, I concluded that they effectively worked in a manner that would provide an entrance point for mass interaction with their works. Almost everyone could understand pop culture and the often base nature initially attributed to their work but, more importantly, these projects were largely built on complex conceptual ramifications and explorations that were there for the consideration of their patrons if they had commitment to the works. In effect, it was more than ever before the responsibility of the viewer to involve themselves in the dissection of meaning of the project but that involvement could simultaneously exist on multiple levels. Making *Art Bar* extremely inclusive was a major goal and allowing for different levels of engagement and experience provided access to an extremely eclectic crowd. I think this was most offensive to the detractors of my project, who largely belonging to the long lost modernist sculptor and painter school.[5] The fact that everyone was allowed to participate seemed somehow very offensive and it was promptly called populist and shallow. Most participants in the project engaged in the challenge to consider its meaning and generally participated in a debate over its relevance. I had already considered the fact that certain participants would gain more from the project than others and this is actually a part of the goal in this project and my other projects. In fact, I specifically count on and include elements that reference history or provide clues to my goals as a means to inspire debate. *Art Bar* was intentionally open, inclusive and aimed to have many different eclectic participants. My work strives to allow access on multiple levels and it breaks down and plays off of elitist conventions in art. *Art Bar* looked to participants to generate meaning: their extensive backgrounds and opinions are the resulting focus of the project.

To conclude the section on conceptual art, it is important to reiterate that this is only a cursory introduction to the history of the movement as well as its meaning in relation to my work. The four qualifying attributes provided an opportunity to outline some of the ways the movement has informed my outlook and creative goals but there is far more that could be said here. The conceptual art movement was, historically, the culmination of a long line of critical inquiry and saw its climax in this recent movement. What is relevant about the movement to the work of today is that it provides a methodological oeuvre which creatives can pull from and include in their continued explorations of meaning. No longer is the concept the exclusive focus of a project to the negation of aesthetics or the end goal of an exhibition. The attributes of the conceptual art movement are used by me as only a part of the many options I have to generate my projects. They are synthesized with the other attributes from other movements in order to generate work that is modern but indebted to a rich history of conceptual exploration.

5. Please see page 90 and the blog comments associated with the feedback.

## Section Three – Design History.

In an attempt to get succinctly to the roots of the design history relevant to *Art Bar*, I will look at three recent (from the last 30 years) critical interventions posed to the traditional history of form follows function or rigid functionalism that had traditionally been the predominant mode for designers. The eighties Memphis group was one of the most noticeable challenges to that convention and gained a lot of notoriety largely because of the sensationalist aesthetic of their work. Their work posed a challenge to convention as well as inspired a critical discourse around a certain type of intervention. More close to the concepts behind *Art Bar* lies the Droog Collective and their work that has come to fruition throughout the mid to late nineties and into the 21st century. This collective of designers has pursued multiple challenges to the traditional role of design and the definition of designer. As a group, Droog designers generally have an erudite and academic background similar to that of the Conceptual Artists. Lastly, I will look at some of the most recent developments in conceptual based design practice in the work of the designer/artist or creative, Tobias Wong. My exploration of each of these design histories will be somewhat brief and will focus on the defining elements that directly influence and affect my work. There is a large amount of information that deserves greater study but, for my purposes, I will have to stay within the bounds of relevancy.

**Memphis** (Fig. 24)

Upon initial viewing, Memphis work appears to embody only frivolous whimsy which is often manifest in aesthetic of their product output and their representative style. However, the work of the Memphis group is more important than a mere playful aesthetic challenge. Memphis was formed in 1980 by Ettore Sottsass in Italy and owed its genesis to its critical outlook on the design of the time. As an initial intervention against historical design hegemonies, the sentiment represented conceptually within the works of the group resonate clearly and retain as much value to the history of design as Fluxus or conceptual art did to the Art world. It is also important to note that there have been challenges posed to the design practice over the years but Memphis represented the critical zeitgeist that would emerge as new design thinking during the post-modern epoch of the eighties. I find several things particularly important in the explorations of the Memphis group. Firstly, their embrace of the taboo inspirations of popular and fashion culture. Secondly, their Fluxus-like manipulation of the quotidian object and the semiotic meanings that accompany such objects broke the ice for further intellectual design explorations at a later date.

Memphis developed their aesthetic as a reaction to what was increasingly felt to be a restrictive and stifling design history. Historically, there was a great amount of pressure placed on the profession of design to create products that were very utilitarian in nature and generally without ornament. This pressure came from historical conventions that were similar to the modernist art movement's quest for an independent art of pure form and material. The initial impetus behind these theories was the Bauhaus and its academically enforced rigidity and discipline. These sentiments were largely predominant in world architecture throughout the early-to-late middle of the century and were constantly being espoused by critics and theoreticians internationally. This reached the extreme of academic enforcement and influenced many of the explorations of product design in the late sixties and early seventies. Although more in-depth in theory than I can outline here, the following quote alludes to the influencing factors behind the challenges posed by the Memphis group. Dieter Rams, who worked for Braun and was a leading proponent of the modernistic rigidity represented by the company's products, wrote in his 1984 essay, *Omit the Unimportant,* about the qualities of

such design:

> Braun products eliminate the superfluous to emphasize that which is more important. For example, the contours of the object become more placid, soothing, perceptible, and long-living. Much design today is modish sensation and the rapid change of fashion outdates products quickly. The choices are sensible: disciplined simplicity or forced, oppressive, stultifying expression. For me there is only one way: discipline. (Gorman, 208)

The language used by Rams is very similar to that used by the critical heavyweights of modernism in art like Clement Greenberg. This logic is indicative of the type of absolutism that ultimately led to the challenges raised by artists like those in the Fluxus and conceptualist schools. The effect was similar for practitioners of design. This forced discipline had led to a loose interpretation by the manufacturing industry and the creation of square and ultimately unimaginative products had permeated the economy. Furthermore, similar practice in architecture had led to depressing and oppressive concrete tenements which were coming under intense criticism. Under the guidelines proposed by Rams, there was little room for creative expression or for products to serve any purpose outside of utilitarian.

With ardent conviction of their purpose similar to Rams', the Memphis group challenged the rigid formal conventions of modernist design with a colourful and controversial new aesthetic. The group borrowed its name from a Bob Dylan song that referred to the Memphis blues and a mobile home. The aesthetic of their work was a shocking collision of color, pattern, form and flippant style that represented the complete opposite of the rigid and disciplined designs preceding them. They embraced the notion of fashion and aimed to be an aesthetic movement based on the expediently evolving contemporary pop and media culture. The pervasive nature of imagery being perpetually generated in association with product advertisements and popular entertainment was a perfect source of inspiration to a movement that looked to shake the foundations of utilitarian and rigid design aesthetic. This is outlined by one of the key members, Ettore Sottsass:

> Traditional modern design resorts to the most basic elements of product language. It says that the impression we should get of an object must come from the construction; that the most important thing we should be able to read in an object is its function; that color must be so applied as to bring out the product's construction and function, and so on. We of Memphis say the opposite, we say O.K., this is all very important. But because we already consume so much imagery through photography, television, magazines, film and the like, and so fast, we need to produce stronger stimuli, more concentrated, more rapid, more complex. (qtd. in Ramakers and Bakker, 31)

This statement outlines the Memphis group's motivation to produce quick accessible work that defines itself in relation to the popular culture instead of in denial of what culture wants. Similarly, in the art world, there was a tendency with modernist work to inherently become elitist as often demonstrated by the theories of main proponents like Clement Greenberg. His criticism explicitly drew lines between art and popular culture sentiments which he often condemned as kitsch. The design theories of the generations preceding the Memphis group often mirrored the art world model and proceeded along similar exploratory paths, frequently dictating what the user wanted without the input of the user themselves. A key element of importance pertaining to the relevance of the Memphis work to the development of a conceptual-based design practice lay in their conscious acceptance of their audience. They were generating work that, although easily subsumed into popular culture, had a critical discourse behind its genesis. Similar to the pop art work of the sixties, Memphis reflected society's desires in a visual way as opposed to negating them.

In embracing or at least acknowledging their audience, Memphis made an important step in what would arguably prove to be the most important development in the practice of design in later decades. The exploration of semiotics[6] had been a motivating factor in the critical thinking of the Memphis group and also demonstrates a relationship that, for me, would most closely align their explorations to that of the conceptual art movement. Concern with semiotics and design is the recognition that artefacts, and the entirety of our visual spectrum, is not only what we see or use but what these material manifestations represent in a complex codified language. Designed objects begin by serving a purpose as a useful utilitarian artefact that functions well for its intended purpose (for example a pair of scissors). However, there are also the many philosophical, sociological, economical and other aspects peripheral to the function that an artefact alludes to. Maybe these scissors were handed down from your great grandfather who was a tailor in war-torn village at the turn of the century and he escaped persecution through his facility as a dress maker. Or, maybe you bought them for 99 cents one night at a convenience store when you were making a Valentine's Day card for your lover. Either example begins with a functioning object but the artefact also signifies or triggers other codified representations of itself in relation to its own complicated history.

6 For a more detailed exploration of the meanings of semiotics and semantics in design see: Krippendorff, Klaus, The Semantic Turn, a new foundation for design. New York, CRC Publishers, 2005

To relate the *Art Bar* project to the work of Memphis, it is most important to outline the challenge their work posed through the medium of design and the histories attached. They were one of the pivotal movements that proposed design could truly function in more complex way than strictly utilitarian and that designed objects carried emotion and expression through a more complex language of signs and signifiers. They broke with convention which, in turn, opened the doors for other movements to more deeply explore the meanings of design as a complex conceptual mechanism that has its roots in the quotidian. *Art Bar* is an obvious descendant of this line of inquiry and uses the precepts of the design of an interior to challenge convention. The meanings inherent in not only the type of interior (a bar) but also the design of the interior (which was lavish and uncommon in Edmonton) complicated a base reading of the project as merely a good design. The intent was to take the root concept of interior design and manipulate the signifiers and qualifiers to allude to the deeper meanings of nostalgia, community, etc. that the *Art Bar* project strove for. In addition, my awareness of the challenge the bar environment would pose to the highbrow nature of the art environment it was housed in was also very conscious. Although I feel that later movements I will cover were more successful in their embrace of lowbrow or popular elements to challenge convention, Memphis does serve as an early example of the approach. *Art Bar* played off the primal nature that a bar environment is associated with but purposefully subverted the context of these base concepts to allude to a more conceptual reading of human nature. The Memphis experiment opened the doors to such considerations and must be recognized as a movement that freed design from the confines of utilitarianism and one-dimensionality, but it would take other movements to truly intellectualize these explorations.

**The Droog Collective**

The Droog design collective is most closely linked with the development of an evolving language of contemporary design that implements conceptual strategies to inspire dialogue about design and social issues. Droog was founded by Renny Ramakers and Gijs Bakker in 1993 and made its world debut in April of that year at the Milan International Furniture Fair.[7] Their work draws inspiration from the conceptual histories of art but also from the exploratory works of design movements like Memphis. Like Fluxus, Droog Design is a collective that often holds their own exhibitions or projects and invites like-minded designers to submit or develop work. Droog's principles have largely remained unchanged since the inception of the collective and, in the words of the founders, are "...clear concepts carried out in an equally clear manner" (Ramakers, 4). Like the work of Fluxus and the conceptual art school, wit, critical dialogue, academic inspiration, mixing of lowbrow and highbrow, and, ultimately, the creation of works that can communicate on a multitude of levels to a broad audience motivate the ongoing explorations of the collective.

Droog has created many works that draw inspiration from issues or motivations led by cultural developments. For my purposes, I would like to look more closely at the challenge their work has posed to the traditional role of design as a mechanism to solve problems and in turn Droog's ongoing reassessment of the role of the designer, the designer's critical relationship to their profession and the traditional expectation for designers to work in response to a market-led economy. I will also look at the collective's relationship to the strategies of conceptual art and how these strategies are implemented as a mechanism to generate dialogues with their audience that pertain to many of the issues that inspire the collective's work.

One of the most important aspects of the Droog collective's work is that they consistently strive to physically manifest critical sentiments prevalent in academic research and critical discourse on the responsibilities of design in society. Droog's critical roots run much farther than that of some of their predecessors

7 For more information on the formation of Droog Design look to Renny Ramakers, and Gijs Bakker, Droog Design – Spirit of the Nineties, Rotterdam, 010 Publishers, 1998.

such as the Memphis group and Droog has embraced notions of design and social responsibility as part of their creative motivation. Droog's critical analysis of the practice of design lay initially with their awareness of the discourse evolving out of the growing responsibilities of the designer and relevant social and sustainable issues. Many theoreticians such as Victor Papenek, Nigel Whitely, David Suzuki and Victor Margolin were challenging designers to take on greater environmental and social responsibility in the creation of their designs and placing a large amount of critical pressure on the practice of design as a whole. The 1980s quote from Victor Papanek, a pivotal figure in the development of sustainable design, demonstrates some of the pressure being placed on designers and the expectations for design in the future:

> In this age of mass production when everything must be planned and designed, design has become the most powerful tool with which man shapes his tools and environments (and by extension, society and himself). This demands high social and moral responsibility from the designer. (Papanek, preface).

This quote is indicative of a new and developing critical dialogue about the practice of design that coincided with some of the interventions (like Memphis) that had begun to pave the way for the more thorough explorations of design's role in society. The founders of Droog had been keenly aware of this and had used the critical precedents, both formally and academically, as a means to further challenge the conventions of the design work of their time. This consideration by Droog has also inspired in my work the need to evaluate my role as a creative and the responsibility of my output. My goal is to generate dialogue through my projects that in turn affect positive communication and a supportive community. My work, including *Art Bar*, aims to challenge participants to consider the ramifications behind what they often consider quotidian and without true significance. Critical engagement and dialogue about both art and design, leads to a continued re-evaluation of our experience as humans and does not leave our experience with the world purely in the hands of a market or economy. I feel my work is aligned to the social concerns of Droog in that I too aim to generate consideration and dialogue about the world that surrounds us.

Droog does not claim to be exclusively sustainable in the creation of their projects but environmental issues have been an impetus in the collective's reassessment of the role of the designer and their products. The products generated by Droog often reassess issues of designed obsolescence, packaging, biodegradability or recycling of older materials but generally also explore these issues by way of a critical intervention into traditional design practices. Droog founder Renny Ramaker's quote outlines the critical intervention present in the environmental considerations of the Droog collectives work:

> The environmentally thoughtful side of the work of those designers resonates in the distance it takes from the short-winded stimuli of the contemporary product culture and from the pressure on the designer to keep creating something 'new". (Ramaker and Bakker, 31)

This quote exemplifies the motivation of the Droog collective to challenge the conventions of the current market-driven design economy that perpetually generates products that can easily make their predecessors appear out of date and obsolete before their time. It is also expected of a designer to reinforce society's desire for the new and to supply the ongoing and self-perpetuating cycle of obsolesce. The issue with many of the contemporary products that capture the attention of the market economy is that they retain only one tenant of the complex language of semiotics and often only represent notions of advancement. The goal of many Droog design projects is to open up the product for interpretation and provide multiple layers of meaning. Their products frequently play with nostalgia or inspire an emotional response generally absent from the one-dimensional products often associated with traditions of industrial design. An extremely important mechanism to inspire this emotional or critical response is the use of the Ready-made by Droog.

Like Duchamp and the many conceptual explorations that followed, the Droog designers often use the Ready-made as a mechanism to inspire contemplation. The Ready-made already functions through a certain semiotic language and when shifted to a new situation or configuration, can inspire multiple new meanings and emotional responses. There are many Droog examples of the use of Ready-mades, but one of the earliest ones associated with the collective is Tejo Remy's *You can't lay down your memories* from 1991 (Fig. 25). Remy's

chest of drawers demonstrates a number of aspects of the Droog design work that separates their explorations from conventional design practice and aligns it more closely with the work of the conceptual artists. Firstly, it is readily apparent that this chest of drawers is made in an unconventional manner. This is not strictly a utilitarian work but demonstrates something more in terms of aesthetics, construction, and utility. The use of recycled or Ready-made materials differs greatly from the mass manufactured or glossy aesthetic associated with high-design furniture. The old drawers have been used in an unexpected and witty way which provides insight into the motivation of the designer to generate interest or, more importantly, dialogue with the end user. The previous expectations of designers were that they create works that would seamlessly fit into market niches and provide efficient services. Remy's work provides minor utility but also poses questions about the nature of obsolesce, utility, memory and ultimately critiques the requirements and expectations of design in society. The artefact itself also poses questions as to the nature of object creation and manufacturing. Traditionally, designers hope to make objects that will find their way into mass production and are challenged to design around the restrictions of the manufacturing sector. This object instead challenges the expectation of mass production and is virtually a one-off creation. Small amounts could be made but mass-production is not necessary for the success of the object. Success in this circumstance lay in the fact that it has generated dialogue about the role of design and is being studied and argued about. This notion is exemplified by artist and writer Lousie Schouwenburg in her essay contribution to the Simply Droog book(71). She states;

> What makes conceptual use-objects so interesting is the tension between a certain disappearing into over familiar and reliable functionality while at the same time they make themselves subtly know by telling something about themselves. Unlike easily disposable gadgets, they appeal not so much to the urge to purchase but mainly cause a different way of seeing. (qtd. in Ramakers, 71)

Shouwenburg outlines what is predominantly the most important revelation offered by the conceptually driven work of the Droog collective and that the collective has an alternate way of looking. These objects challenge their users or viewers to look through a different frame than they normally would as consumers and the objects invite engagement with the poetic and semiotic significance of the transformative intervention offered by Droog-created artefacts. These objects function on several levels simultaneously and draw heavily from the manipulation of the codified language of "use objects" inspired by the manifestation of the Ready-made.

What is of the most significance to my work as far as it relates to the Droog collective is the emancipation of the traditional role of the designer as solver of problems and provider to a market economy. The Droog collective has explored the expansion of the roles of the contemporary designer and provided an opening in which the designer can contribute through more ways than just a material object. The opportunity to challenge roles and create designs that generate a critical dialogue in the end user has been a constant provision of the Droog collective's explorations and in multiple possible exploratory trajectories. This type of exploration pursued by Droog has liberated me from the search for a title as either artist or designer and alternately provided me the opportunity to explore methodologies of both. Where I largely see a synergy forming between the practice of the artist and the practice of a designer is in the conceptual engagement of a viewer or participant. When the focus of the medium is to challenge convention, inspire engagement and debate, and produce artefacts that are somehow emblematic of that pursuit, definitive borders between practices become transparent.

The Droog collection's work challenges traditional expectations of design by employing similar strategies as conceptual art and the art world as a whole. The chest of drawers, for example, forces questions pertaining to craft as it relates to design and mass production. The hand-built aesthetic of the artefact and the reality that it was constructed by the designer's hands raises issues about authorship as it relates to design. The question of what role does the artist's or designer's hand play in the creation of an artefact is under scrutiny. It is similar to the way Fluxus employed mass-manufacturing techniques to challenge the hegemony of modernist mark making in the sixties, Droog designers were challenging the manufactured aesthetic of the current design model. The actual execution of the artefact itself is an articulation of the framing devices employed by conceptual and Fluxus artists. The old, paint-chipped drawers are very cleanly housed in the well crafted wood holders and are explicitly juxtaposed to emphasize the conceptual query behind their use. This would be similar in terms of the signing of the urinal by Duchamp or his pedestalization of the everyday object and subsequent questions about what could be seen as art.

The full extent of the merging relationship between conceptual art and design becomes more evident with the later explorations of the Droog collective. Works like Claudia Linders' *Dare to UNLABEL* of 2003 (Fig. 26) draw heavily on the

explorations of conceptual artists and no longer comfortably reside in a category of art or design but alternately endeavour to communicate in both languages. This garment is comprised of a continuous band of expensive designer labels sewn together and wrapped to make the form of a shirt. Linders received the labels from the owners of the clothing who she had challenged to remove the label, give it to her and then replace the original label with her "unlabeled" version. This Droog collective work exemplifies the later explorations of conceptual art by designers and truly implements the critical strategies attached to conceptualism. Linders' work investigates notions of authenticity and value as it is associated to the production of both designed objects and the output of the artist or designer. This work is raising questions about the nature of commodity and how value is attributed to artefacts in society. Her work explicitly challenges the notion of reproduction and manufacturing as it is almost impossible to create in multiples. Her work is also operating in a participatory fashion which not only invites the public to engage with her work but actuall requires it for the successful completion of the project. This artefact is designed for public consumption in terms of its critical message and the majority of those exposed to it can participate in the critical discourse being generated by the project. The wit associated with Duchamp and Fluxus also appears in this project. It is essentially a visual pun and can easily be grasped but that does not negate the more critical subtext that inhabits the artefact. It challenges deeper considerations of the questions surrounding its manifestation.

The work of the Droog collective has truly opened the floodgates for critical discourse on the practice of design and inspired a multitude of explorations by other designers. The collective is deeply influential to current design practice in many ways and has largely provided a roadmap for the conceptual in the practice of design. The collective's vision and perseverance are highly motivating as is their continued academic rigor in the exploration of new forms of design practice. Unlike the Memphis group, Droog has not attached themselves specifically to fashion or an ardent inflexible stance against traditions in the practice of design. They have, however, continued to challenge convention but also based their challenges on academic interpretations and criticisms. This has led to a more pervasive and thorough exploration of the critical projects initiated by groups likes Memphis. Droog is also continually evolving. Their offerings having largely become forums for discussions with multiple exhibitions of varying, but yet not mainstream,

interpretations of the design profession. The many members of the group also work as professional designers often consulting, seeing products to market and developing work in what could be a traditional design methodology. This is important because, unlike Memphis or the pure conceptual art movement, the critical aspects of the collective are based in a working functionalism and rooted in professional experience. In addition, the collective's work has moved away from pure deconstructionism and alternately has based much of its motivation in critical interpretation and the proactive search for something new. Although (to date) the Droog collective has been relatively successful at the creation of a new pathway for the creation of contemporary design work, another generation of artists and designers have furthered the relationship with Conceptual Art and truly begun to articulate their work in a language yet to be titled.

**Tobias Wong**

The artist/designer or creative, Tobias Wong, is currently inventing a new language that uses the vocabulary of both art and design to express projects in an unexpected way. Wong, who has come to the fore since early 2000, has continued the investigation initiated by Memphis and Droog design and is exploring the role of the conceptual use object and by whom and how it is created. Tobias Wong is educated as a sculptor and an architect but works in a middle-space between the disciplines. In most of his projects, Wong explores the rules associated to the roles of artists and designers while attempting to manifest new strategies for the production of artefacts. Wong's complicated works generally maintain a social component that, in turn, can generate new dialogues about the role of Art and Design in society.

Tobias Wong's work borrows heavily from the work of generations that have gone before. In fact, as is the case with many contemporary creatives, the notion of the Ready-made is a constant in his explorations and the appropriation of other artworks, designs or concepts, manifests through constant shifts in meaning and a definitive sense of wit. He defines his work with the word "paraconceptual", which he says "is of or about conceptual" (Wong). Tobias Wong has made a number of works that implement the output of other designers, largely superstar designers, as a mechanism to challenge values associated to the mythology created by those designers or society as a whole. One example is the gun cut out Karim Rahid's post 9/11 book, *I Want to Change the World* 2002 (Fig. 27). This work by Wong is a decisive intervention aimed at challenging society's consumerist tendencies and the role of design in the context of a post 9/11 world. His description of the work outlines some of his motivating factors:

> ...It's really about post-9/11. His book just seemed to be the most vulnerable at the time, with its title, I WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD, which at this time seems a little too stupid to even be romantic. I'm also tired of everyone forcing themselves to move on after 9/11. It's not often that the whole world gets to wake up at once. (Wong)

Wong's statement defines his position in opposition to the title and design theories purported by Karim Rashid. Rashid is well known for his re-stylization of small

consumer wares and his ability to get hundreds of products to market in a single year. Rashid's work is largely stylized and fashionable, but the notion of changing the world through the creation of his work appears vapid in light of the more seriously difficulties faced by society after 9/11. Wong's intervention works on a number of levels as it is first viewed and then considered. This project is easily understood by a broad audience and the initial intervention has a clear enough visual manifestation to communicate its goals clearly. But the artefact also serves as an entry point to more complicated issues being addressed by Wong that pertain to the responsibilities of design, the consumer led market economy and the world waking up to see that there are grander issues than a coffee table book on design.

An interesting aspect of Wong's work is that it is conscious of social issues as demonstrated by the *I want to change the world* book/gun project, while at the same time often being playful and facetious towards such issues. Works like the *Money Pad* of 2000 (Fig. 28) or the *Smoking Mitten* of 2003 (Fig. 29) have a brash sense of humour and play off of expectations about the output of a designer. The *Money Pad* contains one hundred one dollar bills and was sold for the price of $300 dollars. Like Claudia Linder's *Dare to UNLABEL*, this project asks the obvious question of value and authorship as it applies to the output of a designer or artist. This also demonstrates the awareness of these issues and the hustle of the art design market. The work does not chastise the market but alternately creates a work that provides an opportunity for dialogue and inspires debate. This work differs from some previous conceptual art interventions or the interventions by design groups like Memphis in that it does not have a particular stance as an intervention but is created as an absurdity to inspire critical discourse.

The *Smoking Mitten* also demonstrates a contemporary analysis of the role of the designer as far as solving issues manifest in society. Here, Wong has solved a dilemma raised by having to deal with public smoking bans in indoor establishment. What is interesting about this mitten is that a regular glove or short time spent with a glove off would suffice to deal with the issue. Instead, Wong has exemplified the situation by specifically designing a mitten that could be capable of holding the cigarette. This playfully challenges the idea of designing a product to attend to every situation faced by society. The object solves a dilemma that is really non-existent and fills a market niche that was never really there to begin

with. This process is informative in that it alerts the public to the mechanisms of the market-led economy by simply existing. The usability of the glove would be in question but the notion of it is far more relevant. Also not stated by Wong, as with most of his works, is what the desired outcome of the product's creation was. He does not state how he explicitly feels about the situation or if his product is set for mass-production or a one-off. This is a contemporary issue with complicity that I will deal with in the next section but it is important to bring up here. Most of Wong's projects would work as conceptual use objects whether sold in mass quantities or as a one-off. The fact that he is comfortable with both demonstrates a new outlook for the contemporary creative and that he is aware of the pitfalls of both sides of production and consciously deals with them as projects dictate. He appears unconcerned with the fact that previous modernist expectations aggrandize the authenticity of the single artwork. Previous movements like pop art have already challenged similar concerns and now mass production is part of the overall creative vocabulary. Contrary to that, a designed product that could not go into production would traditionally be judged a failure. Neither parameter is relevant to a new creative like Wong because they understand the notions of rarity and authenticity and actively channel them in the creation and sale of their works. The *Money Pad* exemplifies this in that it consciously acknowledges the idea of artistic or design value as it is attached to mythology, authorship and rarity.

Tobias Wong is important to my work by way of his extremely contemporary approach to his projects. His approach demonstrates an awareness of the complexities of many issues attached to the creation of both art and design projects but constantly shifts, subverts or satirizes traditional hierarchies and meanings. Firstly, there is an ambiguous and flippant view of the traditional roles and stereotypes associated to the output of either an artist or designer. While Wong often uses the Ready-made as a mechanism to explore his conceptual based works he regularly switches back and forth from using existing objects to actually generating new objects. This can be seen in his use of the money, which is real and printed by the U.S. government, or the actual creation of a mitten with a grommet in it, which is using the semiotics of a mitten but has been created specifically for this conceptual exploration. This extends to all of the production concerns associated to the objects he creates. Some are one of a kind while others are sold in multiples. Some are handmade while others are industrially fabricated. He does

not adhere to traditional parameters of artistic authenticity or designer production values. His approach is specific to each object and at the service of the concept and best methods of execution.

Wong's objects are also perfectly crafted, which is deeply important to the conceptual message in that a distracting or poorly executed presentation would interfere with the goal of the work as a signifier of conceptual meaning. *Art Bar* was constructed in a similar method in which all material facets of the project are at the service of the conceptual goal. *Art Bar* was designed by me but built by professionals so that is looked as perfect as possible. Some elements of 'human' touch were intentionally created to generate the guise of authenticity and levels of engagement. The stencil used on the ceiling bulkhead, for example, was created out of "subversive lite" elements such as trucker girls, skulls and crossbones, and liquor bottles (Fig. 17). This was then applied by hand with spray paint so that it resembled a street stencil and had the "touch" of the artist. Many other facets were professionally created or manipulated to lend authenticity to the pseudo-bar environment. An example is the neon signage that was designed by me but created by a professional sign company so that it would be perfectly authentic for the project (Fig. 13). These interventions play on notions of authenticity. The rules of object creation are manipulated to increase the conceptual reading of the project. They are part of the holistic approach to modern projects that takes into consideration the histories, expectations, challenges and particular audience that is going to be involved in the project in order to increase the potency and success of a conceptual message.

The second point of Wong's work that has informed my approach to *Art Bar* is the implicit playfulness that stems from a desire to generate multiple levels of engagement with projects and a post-modern sensibility that toys with the conventions of meaning. There is inherent absurdity in the notion of a bar in the middle of an art gallery and this was also played up by me in my communications with the outside world. I often said that "if the art sucks at least the bar is close." However, like with Wong, if the joke is taken at face value by the participant then they have largely missed the irony in the complexity of meanings associated with it. The playfulness is a critical mechanism to continue with the exploration of meaning ina post-modern environment, but not at the exclusion of authentic content and conceptual ramifications. In fact, it is the opposite as the absurd nature of the work of Tobias is merely another layer in the complicated semiotic structure to the pieces he creates.

Wong is greatly influenced by Fluxus and the history of their exploration of the use of humour and irreverence. Humour was used by Fluxus in their work as means to complicate and extend the readings of their objects. This, in turn, was a continuation of the holistic approach to artwork initiated by Duchamp. The precedent set by Duchamp with his intellectual use of puns provided a model for Fluxus to explore humour in their work. Like Duchamp, Fluxus sought to use humour to negate the solemn character of the high art that surrounded them. Fluxus explicitly strove to break with the seriousness attributed to art by the theorists of the time and, as previously outlined, strove to disseminate their critical interventions through mechanisms attributed to the everyday. Jokes or gags provided this outlet and were explored with fervour by Fluxus who referred to them as "art-amusement". In his superb essay *Zen Vaudevill*, David T. Doris discussed the use of humour in the Fluxus artwork by quoting Dick Higgins (119):

> Seriousness, he notes, 'tended often to be equated with solemnity. Fluxus tended often to react against this by moving in the direction of humor and gags, introducing a much-needed spirit of play into the arts.' By introducing thigh-slapping laughter into the horizon of art, Fluxus confounded art's claims to sublimity and ritual power. (Friedman, 119)

As outlined by Doris, humour challenged the precepts that had traditionally dominated the artistic climate forcing a re-evaluation of the role the art object played in society. Furthermore, the relationship that simple gags had to the everyday would ultimately provide a channel in which the object viewer could engage with the object on a relatively base level. In this way, humour provided an entrance to the object's deeper conceptual questions and lured the viewer of the object into a debate over the relevance of the art object in society.

This level of visual absurdity and holistic project creation is indicative of the work of a generation of creatives who look to use all of the mechanisms at their disposal to generate interest and meaning in their work. Wong has an irreverent and wry sense of humour but also uses that as another method to engage his audience. His sarcasm and irony are an extension of his creative direction and implemented to provide critique of the systems he employs and plays off of in the creation of his projects. Like his manipulation of mass production versus one-off execution, Wong juxtaposes humour with sincere and deeply relevant content to continually challenge his audience.

Let me sum up this segment by saying that the level of holistic exploration used in my work draws its inspiration from the work of Duchamp and Fluxus but is most informed by creatives like Wong who are developing a new and expanded approach to creativity. Wong is emblematic of an evolving creative practice that can be critical and satirical while still generating something completely new and visually engaging. The wit and the manipulation of authenticity and production in his work is another facet of a vast knowledge of the mechanisms of expression that are at the disposal of a contemporary creative. These attributes are now a primary color in the palette of a modern conceptual creative.

I have, through the process of my research, uncovered, a number of current critical perspectives on the evolving practice of art and design and the birth of a new breed of creative. I have found these resources extremely valuable in that they have their genesis in the exploration of conceptual lines of inquiry similar to those that inform my research. *Art Bar* was manifested out of a relationship to the histories I have already outlined but also found its validation in the fact that my research follows a path similar to the published research of a number of contemporary theoreticians. Some of these critical works will serve to outline the relevance of my motivations and the ways my work can be equated to contemporary theory. Firstly, I want to discuss the notion of complicity as described by the critical work *Sweet Dreams – Contemporary Art and Complicity* (2005) by Professor Johanna Drucker. Her book frames the relationship that many contemporary art works have to society, the quotidian and the modernist notion of the avant-garde. Secondly, I would like to look at the emerging synergy between contemporary art and contemporary design and new work that is functioning at the same time in both disciplines while pledging allegiance to neither. A book entitled *Design and Art* (2007) edited by Alex Coles and co-published by Whitechapel and MIT press has just been released and, I believe, will prove to be a seminal work for many future creatives. The most important discovery of my recent research is the work of the French theorist Nicolas Bourriaud and his concept of relational aesthetics. His book, *Relational Aesthetics* (2002), is particularly important to my work as he describes many of the goals and aspirations of my practice in detail. It is a profound affirmation of my beliefs and theories and has helped lend conviction to my current research.

**Sweet Dreams – Contemporary Art and Complicity**

Johanna Drucker's book, *Sweet Dreams - Contemporary Art and Complicity,* outlines issues pertaining to the gap between current art creation and the lack of critical theory able to decode and analyze it. Drucker specifically looks at contemporary artists' positive relationship to popular and material culture and how the modern artist has dispensed with the anti-isms of both modernism and post-modernism. The opening paragraph of the preface to her book outlines these objectives:

> In the 1990's, an abundant range of works of art exhibited in mainstream venues called out for a new critical vocabulary. This fresh sensibility was ill-served by the remnants of modernism's legacy of avant-garde terms. The critical suppositions underlying artists' works were clearly changing. These shifts have now outstripped even the formulations we identify as the orthodoxy of 1980's postmodernism. They mark a turn away from autonomy, opposition, or radical negativity and towards attitudes of affirmation and complicity. (Drucker, xi)

What this book essentially outlines is a burgeoning method of expression that has set itself apart from the previous tenants of art making and criticism. There is an extensive argument being outlined by Drucker that pertains to the contemporary artist's embrace of material culture and the shedding of former sensibilities considered as avant-garde or deconstructionist. The contemporary artists she refers to in the book are no longer practicing in the traditional oppositional roles of modernism or post-modernism, but are currently employing multiple facets of culture, history, and creative expression to develop new work which has so far been critically difficult to define. The contemporary creative, as outlined by Drucker in her book, are not only embracing material culture but developing working strategies that operate within what would previously be considered reproachable mainstream expressions. These artists constantly work inside and outside of previous barriers of acceptable and unacceptable material for their projects. Some of these material culture issues lie in the artist's relationship to marketing, promotion, sponsorship, participation by the audience and aesthetics derived from popular culture. These factors would previously categorize the artists as commercial artists and designers or exploitive business artists and generally be received with criticisms pertaining to authenticity and the depth of the work itself. Unless embraced ironically, these mainstream material culture issues would even now blacklist an artist and are

virtually heretical in critical reception. In her book, Drucker illustrates that this in no longer the case and the complexity of contemporary creativity does not draw such lines in the sand:

> The belief that difficult works of art make gestures of political resistance through their unconsumability is a legacy of the avant-garde. The idea that aesthetic expressions should be marked by a conspicuous difference from the forms created by the culture industry is the critical lynchpin of this belief system. Tenets of this orthodoxy have (fortunately) failed to control the unruly enthusiasm of artists – even if such concepts dominate the critical rhetoric that attends to their work. As suggested, in recent decades artists have produced a very different dialogue with culture broadly considered. Hard and fast distinctions of "mass", "ordinary", or "high art" don't always hold. (Drucker, 50)

A contemporary creative looks at these material culture manifestations as another of the many avenues in which to generate meaning and aptly uses them the same way Picasso would use newspaper in a collage. The historical restrictions pertaining to validity and authenticity no longer apply. These are the new tools of the trade skilfully applied to create more holistic artwork. This is not in neglect of formal or aesthetic concerns but in addition to these. Many contemporary art projects have extremely well crafted formal displays that reference traditional aesthetics as well as aesthetics of popular culture while directly manipulating pre-conceived formal ideas of what is beautiful. An issue that Drucker seems to be pointing out is that the contemporary creative has generated a new vocabulary that includes modernist history, post-modern history and all the facets of modern material culture in order to speak coherently about work that is relevant to society today. It would appear that many critics lack a common vocabulary with contemporary art and due to that there is a miscommunication of meaning and resulting critical pressure to apply outmoded criteria to the contemporary projects being generated. It is increasingly the goal of the contemporary creative to elude critical interpretation by theorists and instead invite public participation in the evaluation of the works relevance and meaning.

The contemporary language of the work being outlined by Drucker does not aim to uphold the traditional detachment from the viewer either and instead, these creatives implement the language of popular culture as an invitation for public engagement and the resulting dialogue that accompanies it. That dialogue

is one of the fundamental attributes of art that often gets undermined by critical exclusivity but is also forever being reinvigorated by new generations of creatives. Drucker alludes to the import of the new generation's creative investigations and the necessity for new forms of expression:

> ...it behoves us to be attentive to the implications of the ways new forms, by their very specificity, have an impact on the configuration of various dialogues: between graphic design and fine art, between commercial interests and the public interest, between individual perception and formulaic production. (Drucker, 226)

Drucker's statement here outlines the role of the artist (and I would include, designer) in the reshaping of value as it is attached to material culture. So the latest generation of creatives, by way of their use and exploration of material culture, invite a reanalysis of the value of these culture mechanisms and frame the quotidian in a way that it has never been addressed before. The dialogues that are ultimately created by the explorations of the artist provide an opportunity for the evaluation of the very material that forms the complex matrix of our daily lives as they continually evolve with contemporary culture. Drucker continues with a statement addressing the ephemeral nature of dialogue generated by the artist:

> In the dialogues among people and through the media of art, design, and conventional or electronic technology, public debate remains alive. Such dialogue is a process, not a product – it can't be packaged, commodified, experienced as a standard "brand" or sign – and in an image-saturated culture one of the functions of fine art is to keep opening spaces of such dialogue within the integrated circuitry of signs. (Drucker, 226)

In light of this statement, the motivation for the contemporary creative's implementation of previously taboo material culture strategies becomes even more evident. If the artist, or creative's role is one of communication and conceptual implications, then the use of mechanisms that already have been adapted to communicate to a broad social spectrum become more than obvious. To ignore these aspects of culture is irresponsible and may I even suggest, lazy. Would it be acceptable to present a lecture on contemporary socials issues using only the vocabulary of a toddler or the obsolete language of Old-English? It would not make sense or be professionally respectable. So why would it be acceptable in art? I believe it no longer is. It is a fact that society is currently image-saturated and a complex circuitry of signs. It is also a fact that this is the language that the majority

of the world now understands and is capable of participating in. What makes sense is to use that complex language to raise questions about the society from which it derives and to explore new opportunities for reflection, debate and creation. The modern creative must do this to remain vital. The alternative would be to uphold archaic convention and to further isolate art from the culture in which it was meant to function. It's a challenging concept to raise, but modernism and post-modernism have become antiquated gestures and to continue to practice exclusively in those terms is, I would argue, tantamount to a creative form of neo-luddism. These historical artistic canons have led to the current state of creative activity and the histories which are intrinsically tied to all contemporary art practice. The investigations of modernist and post-modernist theory are no longer an end to themselves. These histories now serve as yet another resource for contemporary creatives, empowering them with the tools to develop increasingly informed and democratic modes of artistic activity based on communication.

To summarize the relevance of Drucker's theories to *Art Bar,* let me start by saying that the book outlines a pervasive and holistic approach to creativity that I feel relates closely to what I have attempted in my own practice. Firstly, I am not concerned with traditional roles of what is acceptable or unacceptable in my projects except that my knowledge of the unspoken codes of conduct are part of my creative oeuvre. It is not that I am unaware of the codified meanings inherent in both art and design or the taboo nature of certain cultural topics but that I see them as another mechanism to increase the potency of my projects. If you were to look at creativity (especially conceptual based works) as a game of chess (Duchamp), then I have taken into consideration not only what the board and pieces look like but also the time of day, city, music in the background, marketing of the actual game and the players themselves. *Art Bar* is about more than kicking over the vase to demonstrate truth, it is about everything that surrounds that situation and the ways to increase the potency of the conceptual message. Drucker has outlined that, in the current context of creativity, all elements of our environment are part of the tools a contemporary creative has at their disposal. With every element comes more semiotic significance that can be adapted and altered to generate a truly new experience. This is the basis of my campaign: to not only create the work but to also involve myself in the marketing, press and communication of the project. For *Art Bar,* I created "gig" posters that were posted

by professional poster campaigners that largely work with the music industry (Fig. 18, 19). This was done to allow the project to reach out from the gallery and truly slip into the quotidian. It also presented an opportunity to play off the authenticity of the project. I directed all the promotional marketing because these elements were part of the complete vision of the project and part of the project's populist agenda. I embraced media, marketing, sponsorship and all opportunities to increase the awareness of the project and engage the maximum and most diverse number of participants possible. The posters looked sensational and the interior of the project was brash, lavish and outrageous. Embracing these aspects and aesthetics would traditionally be taboo but, as I have been outlining, these components were intentionally controlled to increase the complexity of the conceptual question. As Drucker has outlined, previous categories of acceptable creative material are no longer elements to discredit but alternately modern mechanisms to communicate projects to contemporary society. These elements are the language of the new creative who make work for an audience that is also familiar with the language, although sometimes shocked by what can be said with it.

**Design and Art**

Historically, the relationships or differences between design and art have been widely debated. Early examples include writing by theorists like William Morris, who looked for a convergence of craft and design, or later dialogues generated by the explorations of early modernist groups like the Bauhaus who strove for a rigid convergence of art and design. While these initial dialogues are important, to more aptly serve my purposes here I will discuss more recent cross-disciplinary issues that are leading to a newly emerging hybridization of practices. However, because of the emergent nature of the current cross-disciplinary dialogues, the topic is still contentiously debated and difficult to exemplify. The main resource for my research in the topic is the recently released *Design and Art* edited by Alex Coles. In the introduction to the book, Alex Coles outlines the difficulty of discussing such an emerging topic,

> Anthologies on art and visual culture customarily embrace subjects or themes that are already recognized and legitimated in academic circles – a movement such as Minimalism or a category like installation. Design and Art differs in that practices which are centered on the interface between design and art have not yet been accorded this legitimacy; they form more of a shifting tendency than a fixed movement or category. (Coles, 10)

The debate on the relationship between these two disciplines is complex and involves many facets. The categories of design and art, as alluded to in its outline, are somewhat loose and the essays that make up the content of each section can be cross-referenced and often fit in to multiple sections. What I will outline pertaining to the hybridization of art and design specifically is what I have been intuitively drawn to investigate in my multidisciplinary studio practice and research. Firstly, I will outline the actual methodologies and working practices of art and design and the ways in which they have been evolving into a new exploratory trajectory based on the hybridization of both. Secondly, I will discuss how these working strategies and their subsequent histories have outlined an evolving role for the artist and designer as director of operations or master of ceremonies. Lastly, I will look at the relationship the new studio practitioner has to their audience and the subsequent relationship with the markets of art and design.

In earlier sections of this document I illustrated how some movements such as Fluxus embraced the concept of mass-manufactured or designed objects as a mechanism to critically engage and challenge the modernist notions of a pure self-referential art form. This happened as early as the *Fountain* by Duchamp but has continued as a challenging theme for many generations of artists. These forays into mass manufacturing, the aesthetics of commercial art, land art, typography, etc. were all initially employed as an avant-garde mechanism to challenge the confines and definitions of art. I also discussed how the contemporary designer has embraced conceptualism and the critical subtext associated to the art movement as a means to communicate meaning by way of their artefacts. The doors that these explorations opened have remained opened and subsequently the once controversial nature of these explorations has largely become accepted. Or, more aptly, these explorations have now become the tools of which the contemporary creative explores their projects and the language with which the next generation of art and design projects have found their voice.

As I touched on earlier, many artists are currently exploring a creative shift that has its roots in modernist and post-modernist theory but is essentially moving beyond the confines of traditional debates associated with each. Historically, largely due to rhetoric of vocal theorists like Clement Greenberg, anything that was considered peripheral to the purity of the art form itself was viewed negatively as it related to art. It was considered an impurity or virtual poisoning to the sacrosanct act of artistic creation. Contemporary creatives are moving beyond this theory and have begun to embrace design's opportunities rejecting clearly antiquated theoretical restrictions. Professor of aesthetic theory Helmut Draxler outlines this paradigm shift in his essay contribution to the anthology, *Art After Conceptual Art*:

> Many of them (artists) work professionally or artistically as designers of catalogues and exhibitions, and they also use layouts and displays of information, reconstruct the historical relations of exchange between art and design, and reflect the strategic implications of design as en element of pop culture for the social positioning of their own artwork. To put it bluntly, a reference to design might be seen today as a constitutive factor for artistic practice. Whereas since the 1960's artists have continuously sought to explore the space between art and design, theory has remained caught up in the old modernist oppositions that come with a purely negative concept of design. Not even the most decisive rhetoric will be able to conceal the weaknesses of this approach. (Draxler, 152)

In this statement, Draxler touches on the idea that the modern artist can scarcely create work without accepting the impact of design on the professional practice. Whether it be the influence on layout or display of images or the pure exploration of the relationship society has to designed objects, the influence of design on art is truly undeniable. There is still a separation sought by some critics towards the influence of design on contemporary art but the majority of the contemporary artists have embraced this influence and often find paying opportunities from the practice. This could also stem from the fact that a major population of contemporary artists were largely trained in schools that offered studies in both disciplines and generally required it. It is only natural that working strategies, aesthetic developments and professional goals previously attached to design would have an impact on the way that the practice of art is developing. The current generation of artists is versed not only educationally with the practice of design, but often professionally and as participants in popular culture, and they understand the ways in which design informs, alters and challenges society. It would be naïve and virtually impossible for these contemporary artists to exclude design from their practice, and especially considering the rallying cry first resounded almost half a century ago. There really is no legitimate reason to deny the language of design in art, and as outlined by Draxler, to do so is virtually incomprehensible.

The working methodology traditionally attached to the discipline of design also has begun to bear a striking resemblance to the explorations of the contemporary artist. Design has historically been considered a problem-solving discipline that generally follows certain working conventions in order to complete projects. As part of the hypothesis of my thesis, I have been outlining an alternate goal for design to raise questions as opposed to strictly solving problems. Design projects generally begin with a problem or situation outlined in a brief by a client or alternately illustrated through research into human factors and desires. Take the design of a new restaurant for a simple example. Here, the designer is presented with a problem or brief: design this new restaurant. The next stage will involve research into the demographic the restaurant owner wants to attract and what it will be serving for food and alcohol. How many people will it accommodate, how many staff, how big should the kitchen be, should there be a staff room, should the ambiance be bright and cheery, dark and romantic, rustic, contemporary, open or closed seating, and the list goes on. The point is that in order to design

this restaurant, the designer must understand not only the need for a restaurant but how to make it function, come in on budget, capture an audience and communicate successfully all the research that was invested in generating the final completed space. In an emergent art-world that draws inspiration from multiple areas and histories of creative exploration, the artist has begun to closely follow a strikingly similar path. Much of the art work being created today has at its core a conceptual message and even if it attempts to deny that and focus on pure expression, the process to do so is generally considered in a conceptual and cognizant way. Because of this fact, contemporary artwork begins with an idea and a message which the artist wants to communicate to their audience or viewers. In very general terms, the art process has begun to closely mirror the traditional processes of design and the artist now has begun to follow a similar path of research, budget exploration, audience considerations, exhibition space, and so on. In the introduction to the *Design and Art* anthology, the Dutch art and design group *Experimental Jetset* allude to this concept:

> Once an artist decides on a goal to pursue, his or her creative process looks very much like a design process. Artists have effectively turned their self-made challenge into a partly determined design problem. And they temporarily turn themselves into designers. So the border between art and design is permeable, and not just from art towards design. (Coles, 12)

The often enforced division between the practices of art and design is greatly dissipating as the goals and expected outcomes of these disciplines become more closely aligned. Since the advent of the conceptual in art, the impetus behind the generation of projects in both art and design has become more closely intertwined. Because I have outlined this in the section on Droog design and other contemporary designers, I will not go into much detail about the relationship from the side of design. However, I will mention that the designer is also more closely embracing the self-driven design brief in a way similar to the artists mentioned by Experimental Jetset. Like the Droog collective designers, these creatives initiate their own creative goals and use the methods inherent to their design profession to bring these creative goals and their conceptual outcomes to fruition.

Many artists have gone even further in exploring the relationship to the working methodologies of design. The premier example of this is Andy Warhol and his Factory of the late 1960s and 1970s. Warhol made his mark in the New

York design community as a very successful illustrator and graphic designer. He was informed by the processes he was exposed to in his role as an illustrator and as an art director. He directly transposed the working methodologies he had been exposed to as a designer onto his artwork and subsequent forays into film and magazines. Warhol was the lead art director and director of operations for his own art career. This was avant-garde at the time but has become a recognized working methodology for the contemporary artist and it is completely expected in the discipline of design. It was not only Warhol who led to this practice of art direction being so ingrained in the practice of contemporary art but also many artists like Donald Judd with his industrial manufactured sculptures, Fluxus with their industrially-made products and even more recent artists like Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst who art direct the majority of their products. The practice of working as a director of operations for an art project has become increasingly acceptable in the field of art and for the most part does not concern itself with the modernist debate on authenticity. In addition, massive scale contemporary art projects such as Mathew Barney's Cremaster cycle, or Liam Gillick's installations would never see the light of day without the labour of others. What the artist and designer offer is conceptual vision, research, art direction and project direction to manifest their theoretical aims. Would the designer of the aforementioned restaurant need to actually build the walls and paint the rooms for his work to be considered an authentic design project? The answer is no and this is also applying to the works of later generations of artists. Donald Judd studied the forms of his sculptures, chose a finish, and had them manufactured. His role in that art project was the concept, the display and the project management to see them to fruition. The aesthetic and conceptual vision of the restaurant belongs to the designers who generated it out of their research regardless of how it was ultimately executed. The aesthetic and conceptual vision of the Judd sculpture belongs to Judd regardless of how it was executed. The steps that were taken to reach that completion of a successful project lay in the conceptual impetus, the research into relationships with the participant, the research into execution and the project management to see it happen. If the argument is raised about the notion of craftsmanship and artists or designers who hand-make their artefacts, I would suggest that, again, these individuals are sharing a common working methodology that is based off of the conceptual decision to challenge manufacturing and authenticity. A new generation of artists who are aware of the benefits and limitations of both craft and

manufacturing are moving freely between the two without the borders that would typically qualify their work as art, design, populist, existentialist or otherwise. All of these aspects are now part of the methods of communication associated with the art project and are implemented to provide the most effective way of communicating the artistic message. The new creative is now comfortably working as an art director and project manager and, in these positions, often gets their hands dirty when it comes time to complete the project. This no longer invalidates or validates the project and alternately provides an opportunity to explore works on a greater level of complexity and scale then ever before. The new creative explores projects in a variety of manners and assumes multiple roles in the execution of their projects which were previously associated with the design field. At the same time, the contemporary creative is keenly aware of the impact these new roles have on the conceptual ramifications of their work and comfortably operates both inside and outside of historically limiting parameters of legitimacy. The resulting projects are a manifestation of the awareness of the historical significance of these roles, an implementation and manipulation of that significance, and the basic embrace of utilitarian efficiency needed to complete new work on grander scales of complexity.

*Art Bar* has evolved from a study and practice of design. I have invested a lot of research and effort into the profession of design and I am very comfortable with the processes and methodologies inherent in the practice. Like many contemporary creatives, I implement many aspects of the design practice in my projects. However, unlike some creatives, I have an extensive background in both design and art history which has been exercised professionally and academically and ultimately has a greater impact on the nature of my projects. Projects like *Art Bar* have their genesis in the methodologies of design and rely on my professional history to manifest them successfully. However, the impetus behind projects like *Art Bar* differs from traditional design practice in that my goal is to raise questions rather than provide concrete answers. Here, my practice has a closer allegiance to traditional conceptual art but, as outlined by many of my examples, new design work is hard to define concretely. *Art Bar* started with a concept which closely mirrored a design brief and the process of its creation required me to assume many design related roles. Lead designer, construction manager, art director, public relations, marketing manager, etc. These roles are historically not normally attributed to an artist but the processes of contemporary creative projects require

my competence in all of them. Ultimately, for the success of the project, I assumed multiple roles in order to effectively manage all the aspects that would later contribute to a greater whole. My practice operates comfortably within the histories and parameters of the art and design profession but only as far as it allows for the successful completion of a project. If there is a possibility that the holistic vision I have for the overall project will be compromised by neglecting something due to parameters of historical working methodologies, I will work outside those borders. I explain it as clearly as possible here, but I instinctively realized that once your work is focused on a conceptual quandary, there are no operational borders. Methodologies can be synthesized to optimize the outcome of a project. My interest in the art versus design debate as it has emerged today lie in the fact that, provided with a similar goal, the practices have more than ever become complimentary.

The relationship between contemporary art and contemporary design is an extremely complicated and intricate one. It is comprised of cross-pollinated histories and modernist avant-garde challenges emerging as a new working methodology. Both disciplines have borrowed from the working methodologies and goals of others and, as new group of creatives emerge, their practice becomes increasingly difficult to define as either. This is largely due to the intuitive use of each discipline's complicated history and the processes they use to accelerate the conceptual significance of contemporary creatives' projects. A new practice has emerged that largely lacks definition and is ultimately uninterested in the necessity of categorically defining its methods. To work as a creative in a contemporary manner is reliant on opening borders and drawing inspiration from all facets of contemporary life.

## Relational Aesthetics

I was directed to the book *Relational Aesthetics* by Nicolas Bourriaud by Stephen Harris, one of my former art history instructors. The concepts outlined within the book mirror issues that I have been drawn to in my art and design work. The theories revolve around the development of a new body of work by a new generation of creatives that, as i did with my *Art Bar* project, look to generate social or relational situations. Bourriaud defines relational art as:

> A set of practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space. (Bourriaud, 113)

The work Bourriaud describes manifests in multiple different manners and materials, but the essential goal is to generate inter-human relations and awaken the viewer to not only the art experience but also the value of the experiences taken for granted in modern society. To efficiently outline the values of the theories posited in this book, I will look at a number of quotes from Bourriaud's book and delve into an exploration of the meanings behind the quotes and how they relate to my *Art Bar* project. The quotes discussed will provide a general outline to the relevance of the theories to my work and the essential nature of the books theories.

The physical form of the contemporary projects outlined by Bourriaud are extremely important, although not in the traditional sense that form is associated to the visual display of art. Traditional art looks at form or aesthetics as an element unto itself to be admired for its facility, execution, layout, color relationships and many other aesthetic concerns attached to the viewing of it. The formal values of contemporary creative work now relates to the ways in which it can facilitate the setting of experience and the complex relationship that setting has to the concept of the project. Bourriaud describes it like this:

> Unlike an object that is closed in on itself by the intervention of a style and a signature, present-day art shows that form only exits in the encounter and in the dynamic relationship enjoyed by an artistic proposition with other formations, artistic or otherwise. (Bourriaud, 21)

Contemporary creative projects are not at the service of form but rather form is at the service of the contemporary creative project. As I have previously outlined, the history of form as it relates to art is now a part of the language used to communicate conceptual goals and no longer strictly the solid material that comprises it. The way a project now looks, along with its title, location, marketing, opening or virtually any other aspect attached to the project, are manipulated by the creative to provide conceptual resonance for the work. Bourriaud has coined the term "semionaut" to describe the contemporary artist or creative because they "invent trajectories between signs" (113). This is the true nature of the contemporary creative in that they provide alternate routes of navigation through an increasingly complex world and use the semiotic nature of the things that comprise our world to provide meanings alternate to the ones usually anticipated by the viewers of these elements. New meanings are thus created and new challenges posed to the participants of such projects. The new generation of creative is not merely a craftsperson, or conceptual artist, or product designer, painter, advertising agent, publicist or any of a myriad of other disciplines. Instead they are all of these things at the same time and will assume these roles as it is necessary for the success of their projects.

The notion of "dynamic relationship enjoyed by an artistic proposition with other formations" outlined by Bourriaud is extremely important as far as it relates to *Art Bar*. *Art Bar,* in itself, is a proposition or invitation to experience. The conceptual foundations are forged in an intersection of performance, design, video, sculpture, formalism, etc., that all play off of each other as well as the real world in order to generate a unique experience. This experience requests both physical and mental engagement by its participants and purposefully frames the formations of the quotidian in an unexpected and absurd way. *Art Bar* is essentially composed of a unique juxtaposition of signifiers that form the basis for a creative query into experience as it is ambiguously presented as both real and artifice. Ultimately, there is no end result other than the experience as it resides in the minds of those who have participated and the mythology generated around its existence, experienced or otherwise. *Art Bar* is a challenge to critically engage with a new formation of traditional signifiers as they are uniquely juxtaposed and referenced.

So the question arises when reading through the Bourriaud books: what is the essential nature of the modern artwork? If form and all other aesthetics outputs are at the service of the concept, then what is the objective of the project or, more precisely, is there a contemporary creative muse? What is outlined by Bourriaud as the focus of the modern artist is ephemeral at best but yet truly a topic worth investigation. Human relations and how those relations can be generated, challenged and fostered through creative means has become a primary focus of the modern creative. He outlines the history as follows:

> After the area of relations between Humankind and deity, and then between Humankind and object, artistic practice is now focused upon the sphere of inter-human relations, as illustrated by artistic activities that have been in progress since the early 1990s. So the artist sets their sights more and more clearly on the relations that his work will create among his public, and on the intervention of models of sociability. (Bourriaud, 29)

This new focus differs greatly from the previous generations explorations not only in its formal nature but also the holistic approach to the relationships sought within the creative project. This new work acknowledges the manner in which meaning is generated in a work of art through viewer subjectivity and postulates that the value of art in society is its essential nature to inspire inter-human relations. The work has been stripped to a primary essence and now facilitates democratic engagement, or at least invites it. This differs greatly from the modernist postulations on utopian idealism or the post-modern deconstructionist agenda. The contemporary creative now uses all facilities at hand to invite social engagement and has focused efforts on framing human nature in its vast complexity as the true nature of the art project. Bourriaud suggests that the inter-human relationships sought by the contemporary artist are more than mere whimsy and have begun to develop into a cohesive exploratory trajectory:

> ...the figures of reference of the sphere of human relations have now become fully-fledged artistic "forms". Meetings, encounters, events, various types of collaboration between people, games, festivals, and places of conviviality, in a word all manner of encounter and relational invention thus represent, today, aesthetic objects likely to be looked at as such, with pictures and sculptures regarded here merely as specific cases of a production of forms with something other than a simple aesthetic consumption in mind. (Bourriaud, 28)

This is the true crux of the *Art Bar* project and the primary motivation for the work. *Art Bar* is a stage, albeit an elaborate one, in which people are invited to bring what they have to the party. Each individual has certain social characteristics and zones of comfort. *Art Bar* triggers reactions that instinctively active these both comfortably and in an unsettling manner. Ultimately, there is great value in the irony of discussing the relevance of the critical inquiry set about by *Art Bar* within the confines of the installation while also enjoying a drink and the company of others. That comfort or discomfort within the situation and that person's intrinsic relationship to the parameters of art and life is the artwork itself. There is no discussion necessary to the success of the project as that discussion, or even lack of it, is the very substance of the creative vision behind the project. All questions pertaining to what is art, experience, absurd, exhilarating, stupid, base or over-intellectual apply to the value of the project and achieve its main purpose of highlighting interactivity as it relates to the participants of project. Bourriaud explains the concept as follows:

> The subversive and critical function of contemporary art is now achieved in the invention of individual and collective vanishing lines, in those temporary and nomadic constructions whereby the artist models and disseminates disconcerting situations. (Bourriaud, 31)

The notion of a disconcerting social situation raised here is also of fundamental importance to *Art Bar*. We are constantly being invited to engage in spaces or scenarios with pre-ordained and often unspoken set of rules and parameters. Each social setting is codified with rules of conduct and, whether abiding by those rules of conduct or challenging them, the significance lies in the instinctual awareness individuals have of them. The *Art Bar* purposefully challenged this codified strata of behavioural patterns by subverting both the rules of engagement attached to a major contemporary art gallery and the rules of behaviour associated with the lounge environment. The message often projected by a gallery, and (especially the brutalist architecture walls of the old Alberta Gallery of Art) is one of closed elitism, austere appreciation and tomb-like reverence. This was subverted by the existence of a loud bar positioned in the heart of the very slumbering beast which could previously be considered the established art vitrine. When almost 1000 people packed the gallery on opening night and stood at both a critical distance and in complete engagement with the *Art Bar* exhibition, the foundations of the

codified behaviour patterns associated with each were shaken. *Art Bar* was a challenge to engage in a complicated social setting that deconstructed and reconstructed behavioural patterns while at the same time framing the fluidity of sociality and engagement.

Many colleagues and creative peers questioned my motivation for the grandeur of the *Art Bar* project. It was extremely elaborate, opulent and expensive and so closely mirrored the construction of an actual bar that I had numerous offers to transpose it to a real situation. Many in the art establishment suggested a more pared-down approach and also that I push the "conceptual" in the work. *Art Bar* was not about immateriality or the other more obvious gestures that could align it with the aesthetic of art. It specifically avoided any signifiers of the art experience that would qualify its existence. Alternately, *Art Bar* set out to be the best lounge anyone had ever seen and to be completely swept up in its cohesive alternate reality. This choice was made instinctively and, upon reading *Relational Aesthetics*, academic support was presented to lend legitimacy to my decision. *Art Bar* is not part of the old dialogues about art, or at least not participating in the traditional sense and under a traditional rubric. Bourriaud is quick to point out that this is not a return to any particular art movement or any sort of "neo ism":

> To head off any polemic about a so-called return to "conceptual" art, let us bear in mind that these works in no way celebrate immateriality. None of these artists has a preference for "performances" or concept, words that no longer mean a whole lot here. In a word, the work process no longer has any supremacy over ways of rendering this work material (unlike Process Art and Conceptual Art, which, for their part, tended to fetishize the mental process to the detriment of the object). (Bourriaud, 47)

What is being outlined by Bourriaud refers to a concept investigated in this support document which is of great importance to the *Art Bar* project and the work of the contemporary creative. The aesthetic representation of the objects and projects created by these contemporary individuals only represent themselves in a manner best suited to the overall vision for the work. This means that sometimes they are hand-crafted, sometimes mass-produced, sometimes opulent and sometimes immaterial, all at the service of the dialogue they were intended to create. This also included references to aesthetics of previous art moments and design styles that now connote meanings ulterior to their intended historical context. Bourriaud

continues the above quote by outlining the view on immateriality and object held by the contemporary artist:

> In the worlds constructed by these artists, on the contrary, objects are an intrinsic part of the language, with both regarded as vehicles of relations to the other. In a way, an object is every bit as immaterial as a phone call. And a work that consists in a dinner around a soup is every bit as material as a statue. (Bourriaud, 47)

The notion of situation set forth by Bourriaud relates well to the important component of the reception of *Art Bar* and the confusion pertaining to its future disassembly. Questions were asked about what would happen to the "art" of it? Or what if other people wanted to see it? In response, I proposed: "If they talk about it, they experienced it". *Art Bar* was meant to be terminal and finite. It was to the detriment of the project that it was extended as these concepts would be granted increased resonance with the original open to close date of 3 months.[8] It was a stage for freeform performance executed by all those who participated. Even more than that, it was intended to live on in dialogue about its own existence. From the mythology associated to it, the spite from the local formalists, the scenesters who loved then hated it, the gallery who continued to try and duplicate it, to the stories I tell about meeting my fiancée at it, everything was part of the overall plan. *Art Bar* was intended to be beautiful and grand but those concepts and the relations and experience we had in relation to it are fleeting. The experience of it, whether vicarious or actual, was meant to exist in the memories and experiences of those involved. Everything else was just a prop. In this way, *Art Bar* most closely mirrors the true nature of our lives: as much as art is beautiful, furniture is comfortable, and cars run well, they are all ultimately props in our lives and merely aid in the facilitation of experience which is constantly disappearing into memory while also being regenerated.

To briefly summarize, theory, both historical and contemporary, obviously informs my work and its continued development. The true basis of my work evolves from my desire to generate a dialogue about the values of creativity with the participants of my projects as well as from my desire to look for new ways of creative expression that most pertinently relates to the modern and changing world

8 *Art Bar* was initially intended to run from June 2006 to September 2006 but was ultimately extended twice by the AGA and eventually closed in March 2007.

I live in. To that end, I have looked to the individuals and movements that most ardently strove for the same goals of challenging convention and progressing the language of art and design. I believe in breaking down borders and challenging the status qou, but in a way that offers something new and manifests without a contrived goal of opposition. In essence, my goal of the dissolution of borders comes from the root desire to communicate in the most appropriate way and, because of that, I find it impossible to operate within lines in the sand. I strive for a holistic approach to my work that aims for excellence in all elements of my projects. Professionalism and authentic expression are both goals I strive for in my work and I aim to create projects that are not reactionary, but that instigate and question. My continued work will be a well-crafted, uniquely and absurdly positioned question mark because I feel the greatest attribute of creativity is the ability and opportunity to ask the world, "So, what do you think?"

## Section Five – Conclusions and Results.

*Art Bar,* by most standards, was extremely successful. It shattered all previous attendance records for the gallery. The opening night had the most diverse crowd I have ever experienced at an event. The gallery was lined up for the entire evening and the participants appeared to be having a sensational time. The execution of the actual project could not have gone better and there were virtually no compromises from the formal end. The craftsmanship was suburb and the resulting interior garnered an enormous amount of accolades from friends, peers, colleagues and the public. I am extremely proud of the aesthetic and feel that this design was my most successful to date. I was given the opportunity to appear on television multiple times, including a guest spot on MTV Canada. Every local paper covered the project and I did receive some national attention. Some of my major sponsors such as Heineken could not believe the success of the project and were extremely thankful that I had involved them. I was told that *Art Bar* generated in excess of $200 000 worth of press for gallery and greatly increased membership. The press coverage also played into the overall success of the project in that many of the dialogues I was hoping to instigate began in the media coverage of the exhibition.

There were some negative issues associated with the project. In particular, my experience with the gallery was not ideal. At points, the project was largely disregarded as an installation during operating hours. It came to my attention that the audio and visual components were not running during operational hours and the lighting was not left at the set levels but turned almost all the way up. This was disappointing but quickly rectified after I spoke to Marcus Miller at the gallery about it.

Another issue concerned the audio and video components. They were never completed by the parties paid to execute them. Unfortunately, I am now without all audio and video from the opening evening. This was to be edited and given to me on a hard-drive and had been paid in advance. This was a disappointment as I had really wanted to explore the possibilities with the video and had planned to put it up on a website so the public could experience it, which would continue the mythology behind the project. The future of the audio-visual components in my projects will most definitely be explored further. I have plans to broadcast such an event to another gallery location and explore podcasts in yet another dimension of experience and interactivity.

Overall, there was also an immense amount of positively that came from the *Art Bar* project. I have had the undying support of many respected colleagues both professionally and academically. I have also had many younger artists contact me and say they were very moved and inspired by the project. This feedback is very moving and provides me with the desire to continue on with my explorations.

Currently, I am moving forward in creating some smaller projects that still focus on the interactivity of the participants but also do not require such an undertaking to complete. I know that it is in my nature to create projects that require a massive amount of commitment, consideration and money and I will undoubtedly find myself engaging in such an adventure in the future. I will embrace the experience and knowledge gained from the *Art Bar* project as I continue to explore work that challenges convention with a healthy dose of controversy and attitude. I look forward to those projects, but for now I look forward to going to a bar that is not art and toasting to a project completed.

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2006 CBC NEWS, Interview with Portia Clark about the "Art Bar" project, Friday June 23.
2006 City TV, Interview with Bridget Ryan about the "Art Bar" project, Wednesday, June 14.
2006 Global Television, Interview with Lorraine Mansbridge, about the "Art Bar" project, Thursday July, 29.

**Radio**

2006 CBC, interview by Gilbert Bouchard about the "Art Bar" project for "Radio Active", July 13.
2006 CJSR, interview by Tiffany Brown Olsen about the "Art Bar" project for "News Room", June 23.
2006 CJSR, Interview by Rebecca Schroeder about the "Art Bar" project for "News Room", August 12.

**Print**

2006 Canadian Interiors Magazine, "Its Happy Hour at the Art Bar", July-August Issue.
2006 Vue Weekly, Cover Story, "Art Bar", By Caroline Nikodym, June 22 to June 28.
2006 See Magazine, Visual Arts Feature Story, "Spectacle on the Rocks", By Christa O'Keefe, June 22 to June 28.
2006 The Edmonton Journal, "It's happy hour at the Art Gallery", By Sandra Sperounes, Wednesday, June 21.
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*WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO RAISE THE ART BAR?*
Carolyn Nikodym Cover Story for Vue Weekly
Week of June 22, 2006, Issue #557

The first time you look at a Jackson Pollack painting, particularly those "drip" paintings he's famous for, your eyes i WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO RAISE THE ART BAR?
CAROLYN NIKODYM / carolyn@vueweekly.com
Jesse Sherburne's installation poses valid questions about art, but does it answer them?
The first time you look at a Jackson Pollack painting, particularly those "drip" paintings he's famous for, your eyes initially struggle to weigh anchor in those unfamiliar pools of paint. Almost inevitably, before you start to sink into its different layers, some permutation of "that doesn't look so hard / I could have done that" rows arrogantly across your mind, and you instinctively ask yourself, "is this art?"

It's a question that can be daunting to anybody who puts their creativity on display, but it's one that local artist and musician Jesse Sherburne hopes people will ask often and vigorously at his Art Gallery of Alberta installation Art Bar.

"I hope people get really upset—upset in the notion of, 'what the hell is this?'" Sherburne says emphatically over a cup of coffee at a downtown café. "Marcus [Miller, AGA's assistant curator] came up to me the other day and he said 'so, is it art yet?' It was hilarious, but I really want those types of questions."

The installation slated to open June 23 is, by its nature, difficult to describe and is most certainly one that needs to be experienced, and not just because of its scope. With it, Sherburne has dabbled in several different art forms—from design ethics to soundscapes and video recordings. One of the most compelling aspects to Art Bar, however, is the fact that it is also performance art—it turns its audience back on itself.

"Art, and theatre and music, doesn't really exist until someone goes somewhere and talks about it," Sherburne explains. "You really kind of solidify that value of what you saw with your colleagues and friends or peers, and usually it's in a bar situation. That's what's really interesting to me about doing this is that's where you go to decide the value of that."

On a nuts and bolts level, Art Bar is basically a fully functioning bar, seemingly plopped into the middle of a formal art institution. While there is proof that Sherburne, designer of hipster joints Halo and Savoy, has the eye to fully realize his very own spatial look, like a Pollack painting, there is more to the installation than initially greets the eye. But don't expect it to be totally complete on opening night—that evening is the final piece of the grand puzzle that has been consuming Sherburne's mind for well over a year.

Using several cameras and table mics, Sherburne plans to capture the ebb and flow of the people and snippets of their conversations. And when the installation is viewed during regular gallery hours, these video and sound recordings will be used to create the illusion of a busy bar.
If you're at all interested in the concept of what art is and who it belongs to, you realize that, from Sherburne's initial question, there run many streams of thought, that he's turned many other questions in on themselves. Will opening night reveal the voyeurs in the audience? Is this a riff on our obsession with "reality" TV?
How do you organize a space to achieve maximum sociability? How do you use music to create a mood? Haven't party organizers been creating aural and visual extravaganzas for years? Does the fact that this installation is in a gallery inherently make it art?

(It's really no accident, as well, that the installation will be set alongside the exhibit Body: New Art from the UK, a showing of young British artists (yBas). The art of this loosely formed collective fuses pop culture, mass marketing and high art, while questioning the value of each of these elements.)

But then Art Bar seems to say more than all of that. It's an idea of something somewhat frivolous—along with the mythology of that missed party—put into the contemplative and formal context of an art gallery.

"We all have codes of behavior with space," Sherburne explains, "so it's going to be an interesting shift from that formal gallery opening—where you kind of say what you mean, but you can't be too critical, you can't be too glowing—to go into a place where, hopefully, people are swearing at each other over it—or not even paying attention, flirting over a drink or whatever—and the performative aspect of that other space.

"What's interesting about this show," he adds, "is that the main floor has that show Arctic and that Group of Seven show, which is fine, and then upstairs there's all this freaky shit going on."

The project is really a dream come true for Sherburne—not only has he been afforded the opportunity to realize a large-scale installation, but he's also able to infuse all of the things that he's learned about bar atmosphere and design with all of the things he's wondered about spaces and how they are framed.

But it's also a project that has the artist, nicknamed "Stressy," straddling that thin line between excitement and apprehension.

"The thing that I really like about this is that with my other work—my painting or installation—conceptually, I knew the answer already. And I would build it around that," Sherburne says, his hands gesticulating a circle. "Art Bar was instinctual, and it freaks me out in some ways, because I don't have every single facet nailed down. I know instinctively why I'm doing it, and that's scary, but there's nothing more exciting than betting all your chips on black and seeing if it's going to work out."

So far, it seems to be. Sherburne can't say enough about the all of the support he's received to help in the realization of a project that has been touched by the hands of some 40 people and that he estimates may ring in at $30 000. He's also garnered the attention of MTV (a belated adolescent dream, he admits), flying in to Toronto for an interview last Tuesday.

When I suggest that he must be something of a smooth talker, he deflects the sentiment before he considers his true motivation.

"This is what I want to do. I don't want to work at Atco gas again or Home Depot, and I am going to do everything I can. I think my drive gets me in trouble sometimes, but it doesn't matter," he explains. "This is my life, and this is my chance to actually get to do this. I have put every ounce of energy I had into convincing people and working with people and talking to people.

"I am an art hustler. I want this to go somewhere, to have a career doing it. I don't want it to be part time."

*Spectacle on the rocks*
Mary Christa O'Keefe for See Magazine
Week of June 22, 2006.

It's easy to miss the Big Ideas behind Art Bar. On the surface, the project is more technically than intellectually daunting. As his grad piece, Jesse Sherburne, a U of A industrial design Masters student, creates and crafts a functioning, alcohol-serving, sexy lounge within the walls of the Art Gallery of Alberta. We're not talking about a café or something on the outskirts of the AGA. No, Art Bar is right in the middle of one of the exhibition spaces.

There's a catch. Art Bar isn't open all the time. The Stoli and Heineken (yes, really) flow freely (or cheaply) for the opening night, and during "Happy Hour" slots throughout its run. The rest of the time, gallery goers will find it resolutely closed. They can press their noses against the glass and behold a super-slick, upscale, empty bar.

But a social space is only as animated as its occupants. A video loop of party action edited from the nights that Art Bar is open runs continually alongside, so the left-outs can see what they are, supposedly, missing.

Of course, this trope ostensibly relies on people giving a shit about missing a party, and most of us will purport not to care. With Art Bar, though, Sherburne is trafficking in the kind of social disquiet most of us still have in our bones when we feel we're the only ones in the crowded room that don't have the handbook for operating in that setting.

Art Bar also invokes a host of other questions. Sherburne is trying to upend the typical relationship between the viewer and the gallery, not only by mixing one kind of public space with another (which begs the poser, 'is Art Bar shaken or stirred?')–leaving you wondering which set of social rules are in place–but also about what deserves space in the AGA.

"What is art in the 21st century?" Sherburne asks. "The dissemination of thoughts can be more seamless now. People don't care about distinctions between design and art and performance and commerce anymore."

He's on to something, and his telling statement underlies our culture of consumption. The 21st century mindset is essentially about being a consumer, whether the product is art, ideas, or Stoli. And we build our identities around the image of consumption.

The Art Bar, a branding image in itself, almost functions like a microcosm of that

experience of community. The video aspect evokes the culture of Reality (as in "reality show" and MySpace) as a pliable concept, able to be filmed and edited and presented back for further consumption–kind of the social equivalent of feeding cows animal by-products.

There are further Art Bar ruminations. The name itself–catchy, yet curiously flat–is almost so un-poetic as to be a Sherburne wink, and his unflinching and unapologetic corporate sponsorship-seeking tweaks the nose of the old "art vs. money" argument.

And more: "I'm questioning the mechanisms of art, of fame, of a 'scene,' entertainment, commerce," Sherburne relates.

There is also the strict aesthetic experience of making what amounts to one really swank watering hole. "Growing up in this prairie town, you start to assemble things you don't get to experience. I was so envious of the idea of New York, of London, when I was a kid."

Art Bar really could be anywhere–or anywhere cosmopolitan, at any rate. Even if it were assembled in a Sao Paulo favela, it would remain privileged space. At least until time and changing vogues corroded it.

Why all this questioning? "I'm not predisposed to answer questions," Sherburne says with a shrug. "I'm not interested in that role. I'm the type of creative individual who is always questioning the validity of everything. I'm interested in the dynamic and social aspect. You guys answer the questions. Or just have a drink."

*It's happy hour at the Art Gallery*
Sandra Sperounes, The Edmonton Journal
Wednesday, June 21, 2006

EDMONTON - Scaffolding and empty plastic pails litter a small white room. A sheet of plastic covers the entrance. Lumber is strewn about. A young man applies drywall mud to a bulkhead.

Musician/artist/club designer Jesse Sherburne stands in the middle of the mess, surveying the birth of his creation in a Red Bull- and coffee-fuelled haze. In a matter of days, it will be Edmonton's newest and hottest nightspot, Art Bar, to be featured on MTV Canada Tuesday and, soon, in The Globe & Mail.

"It's going to be like the Sultan's palace," he says, pointing to a curved ceiling which will be painted gold.

"We have two Frank Gehry cloud lamps. There will be plexiglass tables. Two big chandeliers. Pot lights in the bulkhead. I wanted it to be like Blade Runner. It's a courageous, ridiculous, out-of-hand project."

The 800-square-foot Art Bar is also very temporary: the ambitious installation on the second floor of the Art Gallery of Alberta will be removed at the end of August. Sherburne hopes to blur our preconceptions about art, galleries, bars and use of space, by serving up drinks and conversation every Thursday and Friday evening after regular gallery hours.

"I wanted it to be accessible," he says. "Everyone can come, but hopefully people are going to get the intellectual and critical messages behind it. It's an intervention into the formal, chin-scratchy gallery space and what it means to be in a white cube."

To complete the project -- and his U of A master's of industrial design degree -- Sherburne needs more than a few uninhibited barflies.

At Friday's opening, surveillance cameras will record guests. The footage, perhaps coloured by a few pints or highballs, will later be projected in the bar.

It's an example of Fluxus, a conceptual art movement which often includes everyday objects and audience members.

"All the dialogue and interaction is part of the art," he explains. "The viewer is the performer."

Sherburne has performed in his share of bars -- as a beerslinger at the Black Dog Freehouse, and nowadays, as the drummer for one of Edmonton's top pop groups, Columbus. Two local clubs also bear his design stamp. He created the interiors of

Halo on Jasper Avenue and The Savoy on Whyte. "Working at bars has always intrigued me; the way people interact," he says. "People think you have to design it so traffic can flow easily, but you don't. You design it so people run into each other in parts. You design it so people can be isolated and go off and flirt in a corner."
Sherburne wants to break a few rules of behaviour with Art Bar. Usually, he says, we won't critique an art exhibit, movie or concert while we're still there. We wait until we get to a bar or cafe to make our assessments.
"When you're sitting over a pint with your friends and peers, you're like, 'I think that thing was a piece of shit.' And another person will say, 'I think it was brilliant.'
"It would be great if people sat down and debated whether the bar they're sitting in is a piece of art or not. I'm really a lot more about raising questions than I am about providing grand answers. I hope this piece raises some hackles. I hope some people get really pissed off."

North Edmonton Sculpture Workshope - Studio Savant Blog
http://jessesartbar.blogspot.com/2006/07/art-bar.html
FRIDAY, JULY 07, 2006

ART BAR

Hi there:
I understand there was a discussion about the Art Bar this morning... I want to give you my 2 cents....for what its worth... please accept my stream of thought with out edit. Also, please keep in mind I am not suggesting you solve this but as you are assistant curator, I want to share this.

Art Bar is successful on many levels and has potential as a revenue generating installation. It is indeed drawing people in to dialogue about the gallery and its exhibitions, and yes I believe we can frame the installation as art/design/idea because of its conceptual framework....location. The artist and crew have certainly created an installation to be reckoned with. They've transformed the space and have turned people's perceptions of art on their ears. ....However it's performative / technical aspects have some flaws which I'm sure you are aware of. There are many unresolved components...for me they are as follows:

- Technical problems with regard to live video / audio playback component make it a bar and just a bar. The experience is lost without the ongoing video documentary component... I hope jesse resolves it because last night we ended up just playing music and yes I emphasize that it was a bar without any art aspect.
- ventilation is poor and air circulation make it an uncomfortable experience after a short while. But, the building temperature in general needs help.
- Art Bar could require educators to be on site for interpretive support. In my opinion, bartenders who have to explain the concept to customers/viewers break the wall of performance as server when interrupted by discussion about what we're doing. It's a stage and the bartenders shouldn't have to explain... perhaps didactic panels on the exterior could also help the viewer.
- sound quality is terrible making it not the greatest experience.

On a positive end note...we are breaking some new ground by bringing people in for this type of experience and we provide a very hospitable and quality venue for our guests... everyone is happy and it is very provocative....

Thanks for letting me rant.

vg

posted by miller @ 12:19 PM

19 Comments:

miller said...

Thanks vg – I really appreciate your thoughts, esp. the point about the 4th wall and the bartenders – that's quite interesting, to think of it as theatre: as a performance.

2:41 PM

ecunningham said...

Jesse Sherburne's work reminded me of Canadian artist Vera Frankel's "The Transit Bar," which is about lost art. In an interview about Transit Bar, Frankel stated: "The work oscillates between worlds. Is it a bar? A work of art? True or invented? When I listen to the fifteen interwoven narratives of displacement on the video monitors dispersed about the bar, am I hearing fiction? Drinking art? Are these the faces of actors or just people telling their stories? Are the stories true? And if they are, do they belong to these people? The questions keep coming. I found my niche in life as bartender. I loved it, especially when no one knew that I was the artist."

The "Art Bar" creates an "opening." It meets the visitor half way. It is an intermediary space in which the visitor, or "patron", can contemplate how the physical space of a gallery and the social interactions that take place in that space contribute to the overall experience of seeing works of art.

I'm glad to see the AGA bring in new audiences... even if it takes alcohol to attract them!

12:53 PM

MC said...

This post has been removed by the author.

4:50 PM

Anonymous said...

A few suggested corrections to the preamble for this page:

Calling those with a negative assessment "nay-sayers" is a bit like calling them "kill-joys", or "party-poopers". To avoid these implications of bias, the phrase "nay-sayers" should be changed to the less pejorative and prejudicial 'critics'.

Also, it would be more accurate to note such critics insist "it fails as an artwork", or "it doesn't work as art", as opposed to your current simplistic and imprecise formulation, "it's not art". One needn't deny something status as art to deny it value as such. This should be obvious.

Also, it would be nice, if possible, to ascribe to the ARTBAR "fans" a somewhat less juvenile assessment than "cool place to relax, it's a Ready-made, and it breaks down entrenched social codes." Regardless of whether this actually represents the positive viewpoint of ARTBAR, it makes such "fans" look like ignorami. Such characterizations, while arguably intended to be positive, are embarrassingly sophomoric, and hardly amount to a serious defense of the work's artistic merit.

Mind you, pompous pontification over questions of such 'merit' isn't likely to make anyone look intelligent, either.
12:32 AM
Ersatz Art gallery said...
I'm glad to see the AGA bring in new audiences... even if it takes alcohol to attract them!

Indeed. Perhaps the gallery should sell hamburgers as well... people like hamburgers. Ooh, and cigarettes! They're addictive, so that'd be sure to increase attendance figures!
10:07 AM
Nipper said...
Well said, EAG!

We can trace the downfall of the galleries credibility back to the "tattoo" show from years back.. the gallery gave up its commitment to visual art a long time ago, and now embarrasingly, slavishly, follow the international fashions as dictated to them by the glossy artmags they so desperately wish to appear in.

I won't even get started on that pseudo-brit-pop Jesse kid... man, that's just too easy a target for mockery.

10:16 AM

Critic Bill Marx said...

"The country's arts culture, if it is to be about ideas and values rather than celebrity and consumption, needs independent, honest criticism that passionately asserts standards of excellence and tackles significant issues."

I couldn't agree more... thanks for this forum!

3:39 PM

miller said...

Dear Anonymous,

Thanks for the suggestions, but I will beg to differ. As I understand it, you are put off by the 'low-minded', populist voice I deployed to set the scene. I suppose it's true that high, canonical, even (especially) avant-garde art is conventionally framed by rarefied language and discursive idioms. Personally, I believe that there is often a very good case to be made for articulating complex and difficult ideas in complex and difficult language - but not this time. To me, the ART BAR suggests an other way of experiencing and processing art. No more raised pinkies, and ten-gallon words, so familiar in the white cube (and so deeply intimidating and off-putting to a vast majority of people). Here distinctions between wall, ceiling and floor become blurred – a sign of blurred boundaries on many fronts: the most obvious ones for me being: art and life, high brow and celebrity culture, objets d'art and industrial design, etc. The language used in the preamble was quite deliberate and, I would claim, more precise than any formalizing translation would have rendered. In fact I heard many more reactions that actually denied the work's status as art, than criticized it for being bad art. I believe my categories are widely understood and appropriate. Not one "nay-sayer" has complained (unless you count yourself in that camp), and fans (my camp), as you know, are so clouded in their zeal that they don't notice.

11:37 AM

anonymuse said...

Wow, looks like anonymous touched a nerve...

"As I understand it, you are put off by the 'low-minded', populist voice I deployed to set the scene."

Wha? Didn't you read the comment? She's objecting to the (obvious) bias expressed by the loaded word 'nay-sayers' in place of the neutral, widely-accepted-in-the-arts term 'critics'. Is it really difficult for you to understand that as a self-proclaimed "fan", you might not be in the best position to correctly characterize your opposition's argument? Come on, man! "Complex and difficult language"? Who's asking for that? "Raised pinkies"? Man, what's next, you're gonna call her a fag? You weren't kidding about being 'low-minded', were you? Shameless!
In all seriousness, I agree with critic Bill Marx, that art should be about "ideas and values, rather than celebrity and consumption"

"The language used in the preamble was quite deliberate and, I would claim, more precise..." Sure, you can claim anything, but backing up that claim is what counts. So, please explain, for example, why "nay-sayer" is a more approprate word than "critics", exactly? Who gets to say what words are 'rarefied', and which ones aren't... you?

"In fact I heard many more reactions that actually denied the work's status as art, than criticized it for being bad art." Ok, so both these critical viewpoints clearly view the work as unsuccessful as art... so this is a trivial quibble.

"... fans (my camp), as you know, are so clouded in their zeal that they don't notice."

You said it, I didn't.
9:10 AM
The Questioner said...
if this is a blog, why is there only one post? what kinda lame-ass site is this? GET WITH IT!

he he he... according to 'miller's' profile, he doesn't "really read books"... geez, who hired this dude anyway? he doesn't have a leg to stand on... he must hold himself up with his PINKIES!
3:08 PM
threedeeglasses said...
You guys is hilarious.

I think Marcus was trying to start an argument. It seems to have worked.

In any case, "critics" is just as loaded as "nay sayers," if somewhat more formal. It has a different set of connotations, but they are still present. But if you allow your arguments about the art itself to be waylaid by the semantics of another speaker, you only prove that he has a better grasp of rhetoric than you, and nothing about the work.

Oh yeah: I quite like the Art Bar. It clearly makes people look at the gallery a bit differently, as evidenced by the crowd who show up. Art should be more fun. That is something that seems to be missing from many of the shows at our gallery, at least (BODY has that benefit going for it too, to a certain extent).
1:13 AM
Kiki D said...
Since when did having a more accesible art piece in the gallery make it irrelevant. Jesse Sherburne has succeeded in getting the response he wanted to start off with. He asks the question 'is it art?' Anything that ilicits this kind of pompous elitist kind of criticism must be art or you wouldn't be wasting your time. And what purpose does it serve to judge the Artbar based solely on your personal feelings about the artists fashion sense. To be a functional working artist and manage to garner this kind of interest not to mention pull this off in the limited time available shows some balls.

Are we going to have to go back to the 'is industrial design art?' question again? I believe that the role of observer and participant is equally important in this piece and I do agree with VG in that the use of video and audio playback (if it's up and functioning now I'm not sure) tells a better story of how we function in social situations within this space. The strange beings we become when alcohol is involved is more of the story.

Jesse has created a space that puts us under the microscope. If you want to talk about the culture of celebrity there is no better example then some of the silly posturing and fashion forward antics of those few lustily posing for the video camera on opening night.

I feel a little bit of a 'sour grape' vibe going on here.
8:31 AM
Anonymous said...
"Also, it would be more accurate to note such critics insist "it fails as an artwork", or "it doesn't work as art", as opposed to your current simplistic and imprecise formulation, "it's not art". One needn't deny something status as art to deny it value as such. This should be obvious."

It might be more obvious if it were true. I give tours of the gallery and upon asking a patron and her daughter if they would like a tour I was very rudely answered with "a tour of what there isn't any art in this gallery." As a young artist I question whether "is this art?" is even a valid question perhaps we should be less concerned about what is and isn't art and more concerned about what's thought provoking and interesting to us as humans. I could understand this reaction 30 years ago but in a society where technology, design, and "high art" combine in many facets of our livesand popular culture it is hard to beleive that so many people have difficulty accepting this as artwork. The only reason that i could see for not accepting this as art (whether you beleive it is good art or bad art is a completely other issue) is to maintain the classist ideas that has made art unappealing to the masses for so long.

anyway that's my rant and i'm sticking to it

and just remember it's easier to blur boundaries when you're drunk ; )
7:13 PM
Anonymous said...
Hi! I'm the first "Anonymous" commenter. I thought I'd reply to a few of the comments made since then.

Bill, too bad you're not working in Edmonton instead of Boston. Of course, I don't blame you. The visual art scene is Boston is at a whole different level than here. This stuff is like amateur night... like others have implied, it is embarrassing when you compare it with the great work shown in the world class galleries of the world. What can you say: this is Edmonton.

Anonymuse, thank you for the spirited defense. You seem to understand exactly what I am talking about (although you mis-guessed my gender).

threedeeglasses writes, "I think Marcus was trying to start an argument. It seems to have worked."

According to Marcus, he "set up a blog in the hopes of capturing some of the dialogue and providing a forum." Naturally, some of that dialogue will take the form of an argument, in favor of one viewpoint or another. But, regardless of who started the argument, in any debate it is which argument is more convincing that matters.

Also, it seems like you are misunderstanding the point about "critics" versus "nay-sayers", which I think is an important one, that has nothing to do with 'formality'. One is a negative term, and one is a neutral term. So, as a 'discussion facilitator', do you pick the word with bias, or the word without? Of course, as a 'fan', Marcus is arguing for the work, and others are arguing against, naturally he would prefer to paint all 'critics' as 'nay-sayers' (if he wanted to be MORE obvious, he could call us 'fudy-duddies', or some other coloured term). That's fine, just as long as nobody is under the impression that Marcus, or his language, is striving for neutrality or fairness of viewpoints in this debate. Make sense?

3DGlasses, have you ever been to any other art galleries and museums in other parts of the world? If so, which ones do you think were the most 'fun', and why? Can art be something more than just 'fun'? I'd be curious to read what you think.

Kiki D writes "Since when did having a more accesible art piece in the gallery make it irrelevant"?
Who said it did, kiki? Nobody here.

Jesse Sherburne has succeeded in getting the response he wanted to start off with. If, for the sake of argument, we say this is true, so what? Is that the only measure of success, or even a relevant one, for that matter? I don't think you've thought this through.

He asks the question 'is it art?' Anything that ilicits this kind of pompous elitist kind of criticism must be art or you wouldn't be wasting your time.
Of course it's "Art". He made a bar in an art gallery and, along with the gallery, and its assistant curator of course, have promoted it as an 'art installation'. That would lead the rational person to conclude that they are not asking the question, but answering it: clearly, THEY think it is art, or they wouldn't be showing it as if it was. Many of the other staff at the gallery, on the other hand, don't think it is (or, don't think it's very good, which amounts to the same thing). Many other, average 'art viewers' have a similar reaction. You fail to show why this very common, perhaps majority response to the work is "pompous" or "elitist".

As for "wasting my time", it's my time to do with as I please, thank you very much.

And what purpose does it serve to judge the Artbar based solely on your personal feelings about the artists fashion sense.
None at all. I didn't do that. Surely, many people who have seen the installation and come out disappointed have never met the artist. I certainly haven't.
Commenter Nipper's remark about Jesse being "pseudo-brit-pop" was a pretty lighthearted aside to an otherwise serious observation that had to do with the real problems with the gallery. It seems to me, the point is that Jesse, whatever his 'fashion sense', and this particular exhibition itself, are just symptoms of a larger problem at the AGA.

Are we going to have to go back to the 'is industrial design art?' question again?
That's funny. You were just praising Jesse in your preceeding paragraph for 'asking' that very question.

The strange beings we become when alcohol is involved is more of the story.
It is a shame though, that interaction to such an 'exhibition' is practically 'off-limits' to minors and other non-drinkers (not to mention the possibly upsetting effect on recovering alcoholics, perhaps looking for a form of entertainment NOT sponsored, endorsing, or related to alcohol). I think an argument could certainly be made that the gallery is neglecting its responsibilities to those sections of the population. To put in the simplest terms, they shouldn't be in the business of promoting alcohol use in the place (and guise) of 'art'.

Mind you, that's not the argument I'm making, but it certainly could be made.

In my earlier comment, I wrote "One needn't deny something status as art to deny it value as such. This should be obvious."

The last anonymous commenter (no relation) thinks:
It might be more obvious if it were true.
I really don't know what to say to that. It should be obvious because it DOES happen to be true. Re-read that line, brother anonymous, and think a little harder.

I give tours of the gallery and upon asking a patron and her daughter if they would like a tour I was very rudely answered with "a tour of what there isn't any art in this gallery."
Good for them! I hope there was more to this visitor's alleged "rudeness" than simply her suggestion that there wasn't much worth looking at in the AGA. Most of the time, it too happens to be true.

As a tour guide, you really should be more open to other critical points of view. This viewer's response to the work is at least as important as your own, and at least as valid.

In conclusion, let me see if I can clear up some of this lingering confusion about the threadbare, 100 year old "Is It Art?" question which, no matter how many times it is asked and answered, keeps getting reheated, recycled, ad nauseum, ad infinitum...

"Art" is a word that has a variety of related meanings and connotations. It can mean "anything displayed in an art gallery", OR, it can mean "something with great, lasting, human value". Sometimes, when we talk about art, we mean the first thing; sometimes we mean the second; sometimes we mean both.

So, when people go into a gallery and say, "This isn't art!", they are not insisting that it isn't "anything displayed in an art gallery", but rather that it isn't "something with great, lasting, human value".

"Literature" is a similar word. It can refer to basically "anything written", like reading the literature about a new time-share condo, or it can mean "written work with lasting human value". Therefore, when someone suggests that a book they're reading isn't "literature", they don't mean that's it's not written, just that it's not written well.

So, yes, if anything in a gallery displayed as art is "art", then what the average viewer MUST mean, when he insists that ARTBAR isn't "art", is that it does not succeed in doing that extra thing that art is expected to do, besides simply reside in a gallery; namely, to express, contain, manifest, "something with great, lasting, human value.

Anyone who says that ARTBAR is "art" in this second, deeper meaning, is most likely selling something. Maybe it's just the price of admission. Well, folks, I ain't buying.

There are plenty of bars in town.
5:13 PM
Anonymous said...
"I give tours of the gallery and upon asking a patron and her daughter if they would like a tour I was very rudely answered with "a tour of what there isn't any art in this gallery."
Good for them! I hope there was more to this visitor's alleged "rudeness" than simply her suggestion that there wasn't much worth looking at in the AGA. Most of the time, it too happens to be true."

I'm up for critical debate but that's hard to do when someone yells at me and storms off. I would have liked to have seen what this woman had to say and what caused such a harsh reaction for her. In some ways it's good to see that people have strong reactions to artwork but when that reaction closes dialogue it becomes a problem.
11:03 AM
Anonymous said...
Holy cr@p, anonymous, you are an incorrigable snob. I would not argue that either literature or art need to be defined as "something with great, lasting,

human value"--what narrow boundaries you place on them. Art and literature are also defined by culture, time, and place. "Great and lasting human value" is as subjective a statement as "poodles are the best dogs in the world". Would you have all art be judged by a single denominator, whether or not each work fits a pre-defined mold or aligns with a certain set of cultural mores?

I also have to say, the way you argue, I have a sneaking suspicion that you are a troll.
12:02 PM
ahab said...
Anonymous12:02, wouldn't every visitor to a one-post blog be a troll? Or are you just trying call "ad hominem" on Anonymous 5:13?

"Great human value" means, assuming I understand anonymous5:13 correctly, that [at least one] human values [it] greatly; while "great, lasting, human value" means that humans have valued [it] for a very long time.

Like any human in any culture, time or place, the things I greatly value hold great appeal for me. I value a good tavern, for example; and artbar, relative to other bars I've had drinks in, is rather unappealing. And it doesn't hold a candle to other artworks I've stood near with drink in hand, in fact come to think of it, I've placed my drinks on better artworks.

To appreciate artbar must I deliberately forget all the best experiences I've ever had at a bar or looking at art or looking at art in a bar? Are subjective statements a thing to be avoided? Each memory of a good bar or a great bit of art was formed under the influence of a particular "culture, time, and place", how much more subjective can it get?

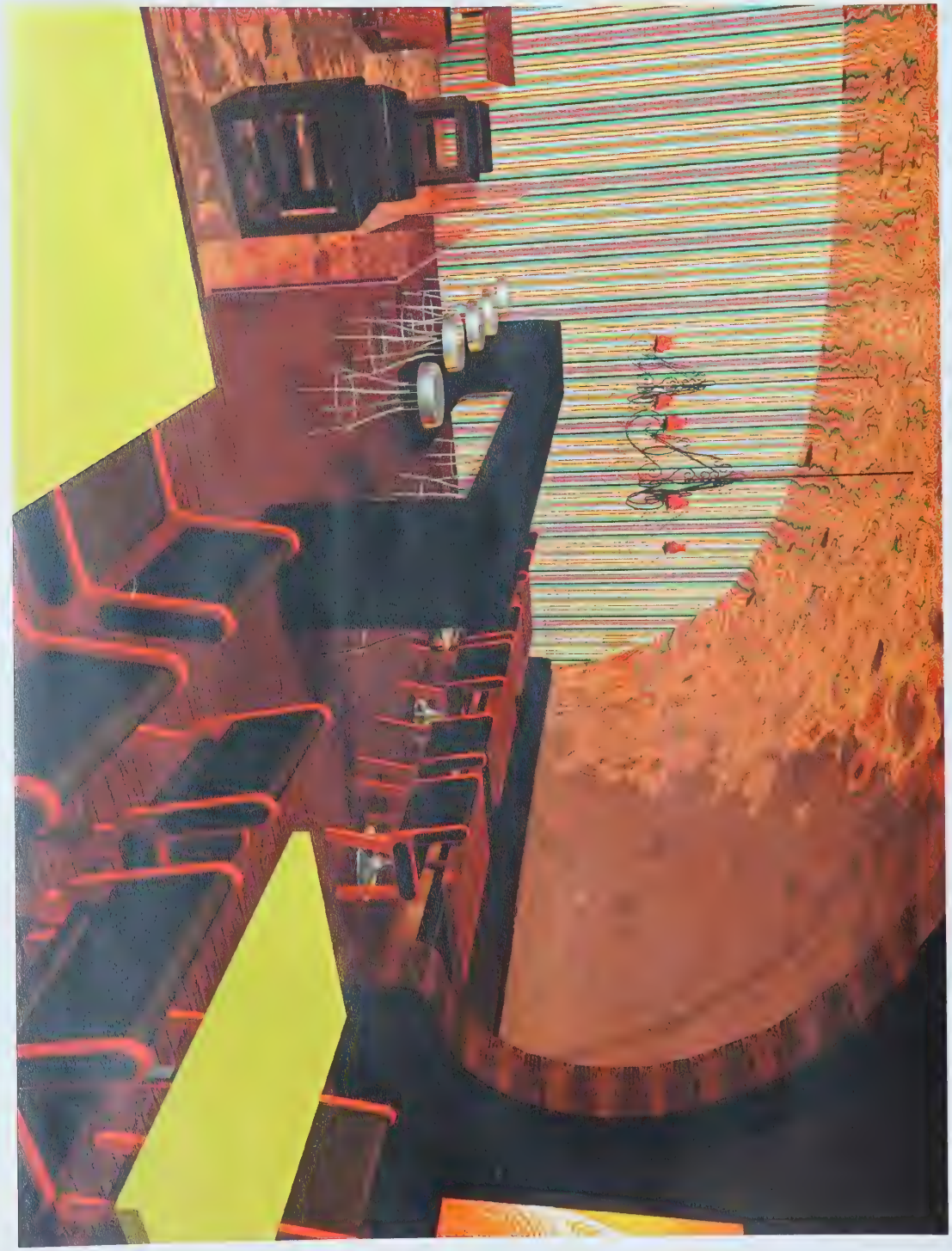
By calling it "artbar" the artist set the mold and pre-defined the narrow boundaries by which I should judge the experience of the installation. Just as it is legitimately a bar, where drinks can be drunk, so also is it art, which can be looked at; my judgment is that it fails as both.
5:01 PM
MC said...
Would you have all art be judged by a single denominator...?

"He who truly thinks for himself is like a monarch, in that he recognizes no one above him. His judgments, like the decisions of a monarch, arise directly from his own absolute power. He no more accepts authorities than a monarch does orders, and he acknowledges the validity of nothing he has not himself confirmed."

- Arthur Schopenhauer
12:56 PM
Anonymous said...
well, I guess this is all about collapsing categories. sort of like model-slash-actor, jesse is a designer/artist. if you can hang artwork in a bar, why not install a bar inside a gallery? I mean - who is it hurting? Why stop at installing a bar? I think there should be a newstand too, and maybe a small grocery store cause theres nothing downtown.

Seriously though, I do hope this conversation can loop round to what appears to be an appalling absence of something in a lot of artwork that is being produced AT THIS VERY SECOND. For instance, just today I read about a woman who is going to be decorating the "grey, industrial" exterior of a gallery with cake frosting, used for its "similarity to plaster". There was a picture, and sure enough, it looked sort of like a decorated cake. I ask the question - why. Why do these people make art? What is their motive? I don't get it. There's better entertainment out there - and smarter ideas too. These artists with their really mediocre, unimaginative and not very smart ideas bore the crap out of me - it must bore them senseless to make the stuff.
Just goes to show - there aren't too many genius people walking about, which is not an issue unless they decide to be artists and then I feel somewhat implicated as specatator, or tax payer - and I really start resenting their not-very-smart and more to the point, irrelevent --ideas. Sad but true. I'm all for art as an elitist enterprise because in my mind I hope that means -- no dumbos. But that's just the kind of romantic I am. When art starts to be evaluated -- as art -- on the basis of its (I'm quoting someone here, and I mean -- here, on this blog) "revenue generating potential" - that isnt' art, that's business. And while art is a business -- sorry to say, business is not art and no poit trying to make it so by putting it in a Gallery. Last I looked, that's what a bar was in the business of doing - business, I mean.
2:30 PM
Post a Comment
<< Home

Fig. 1, *Art Bar* - Conceptual Rendering, Jesse Sherburne, 2006



Art Bar computer rendering.

Fig. 2, *Art Bar*, Jesse Sherburne, 2006 (Photo by Tina Chang)

Fig. 3, *Art Bar*, Jesse Sherburne, 2006 (Photo by Tina Chang)

Fig. 4, *Art Bar*, Jesse Sherburne, 2006 (Photo by Tina Chang)

Fig. 5, *Art Bar*, Jesse Sherburne, 2006 (Photo by Tina Chang)

Fig. 6, *Art Bar*, Jesse Sherburne, 2006 (Photo by Tina Chang)

Fig. 7, *Art Bar*, Jesse Sherburne, 2006 (Photo by Tina Chang)

Fig. 8, *Art Bar*, Jesse Sherburne, 2006 (Photo by Tina Chang)

Fig. 9, *Art Bar*, Jesse Sherburne, 2006 (Photo by Tina Chang)

Fig. 10, *Art Bar*, Jesse Sherburne, 2006 (Photo by Tina Chang)

Fig. 11, *Art Bar*, Jesse Sherburne, 2006 (Photo by Tina Chang)

Fig. 12, *Art Bar*, Jesse Sherburne, 2006 (Photo by Tina Chang)

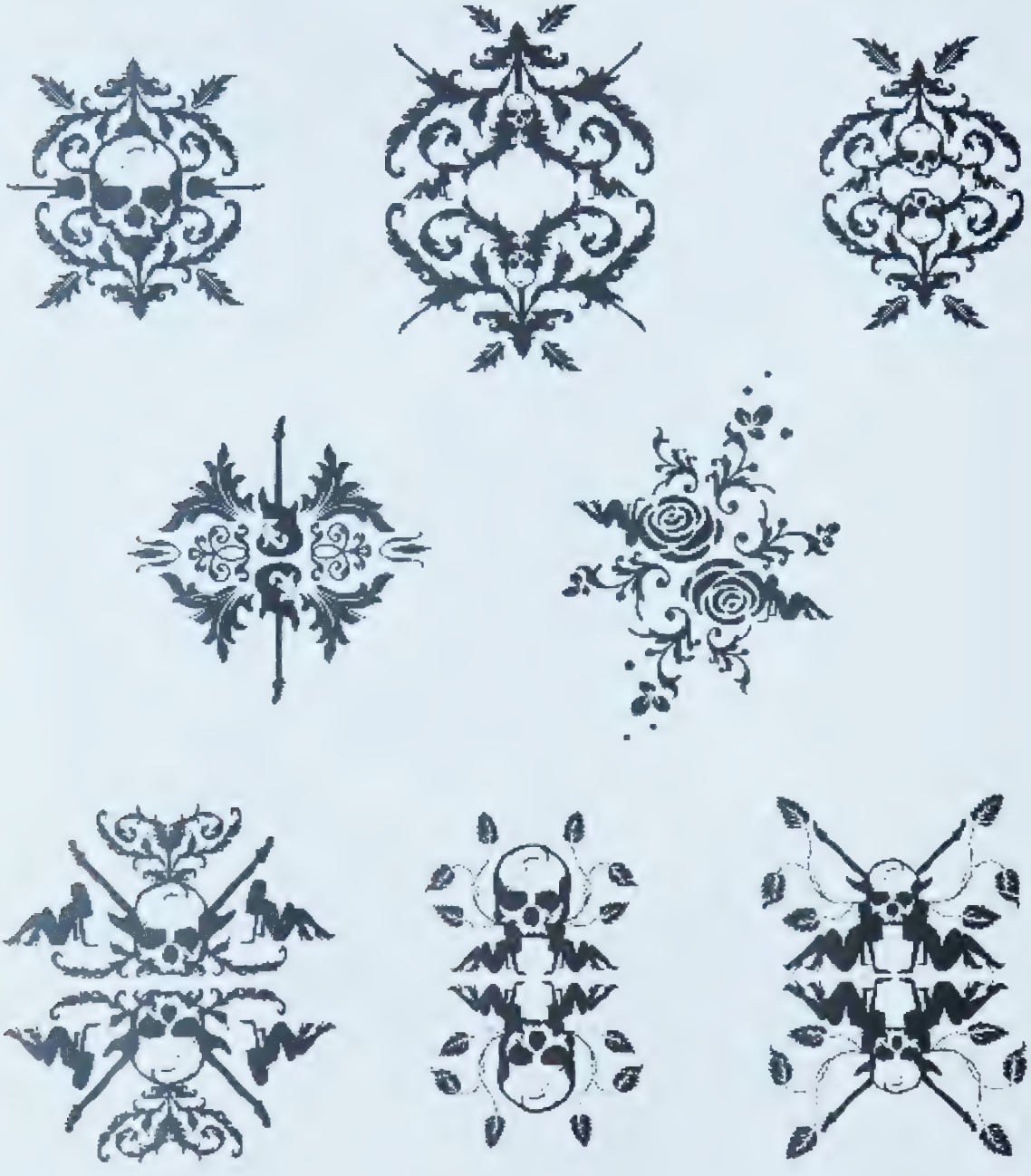
Fig. 13, *Art Bar*, Jesse Sherburne, 2006 (Photo by Tina Chang)

Fig. 14, *Art Bar*, Jesse Sherburne, 2006 (Photo by Tina Chang)

Fig. 15, *Art Bar* - Line Up, 2006 (Photo by Christy Dean)

Fig. 16, *Art Bar* - Inside Opening Night, 2006 (Photo by Christy Dean)

Fig. 17, *Art Bar* - Stencil Concepts, 2006



ART BAR
Late Night Opening Party - Everyone Invited!
Friday June 23, 9pm-1am The Art Gallery of Alberta
Sponsored by Heineken and Stoli Vodka
The Artist vs. the DJ
FAVA Night
M.A.D.E. Night
Happy Hour at the Art Bar
Heineken
BOMBAY SAPPHIRE
Stoli
GALLERY OF ALBERTA

Fig. 19, *Art Bar* - Artist VS. Dj Poster, 2006

Fig. 20, Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, (New York, 1917)

Fig. 21, Ben Vautier, *Total Art Match-Box*, 1967

Fig. 22, Ken Friedman, *Flux Clippings*, 1967

Fig. 22 - 1, George Maciunas, *Fluxkit*, 1964

Fig. 23, Allan Kaprow, *The Tire Swings Over The Mountain*, 1962

Fig. 24, Ettore Sottsass, *Carlton Bookcase*, Memphis Group, Italy, 1981

Fig. 25, Tejo Remy, *You can't lay down your memories*, 1991

Fig. 26, Claudia Linders, *Dare to UNLABEL*, 2003

Fig. 27, Tobias Wong, *I Want To Change The World*, 2002

Fig. 28, Tobias Wong, *Money Pad*, 2000

Fig. 29, Tobias Wong, *Smoking Mitten*, 2003

Fig. 30, Jesse Sherburne discussing *Art Bar* on MTV, 2006

Fig. 31, Jesse Sherburne, Cover of Vue Magazine, 2006

Fig. 32, Actual Bar under construction, 2006

Fig. 33, Curved walls and bulkheads under construction, 2006

Fig. 34, Entrance under construction and taping complete on curved walls, 2006

Fig. 35, Gold paint getting a final coat, 2006

Fig. 36, Ten people were working on Art Bar's completion the night before opening, 2006

Fig. 37, Celebrated a sweaty opening by buying my father a beer, 2006 (Photo: Christy Dean)

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University of Alberta – Industrial Design Department
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Christy Dean
Tina Chang
Bennett and Smith Millwork
Chris Webster
Geoff Lilge

# Jesse Sherburne Budget Report

## Art Bar Instsllstion at the Art Gallery of Alberta

| Description of Cost/Income | Total |
|---|---|
| **Project Budget** | |
| **Expenses** | |
| **Equipment Rental and Audio Visual** | |
| Stereo System for Art Bar: Provided under a sponsorship gained by Jesse Sherburne for complete stereo and installation from audio ark. Total Value | 5500.00 |
| Data projectors and Display monitors provided by the Art Gallery of Alberta. Total cost: | 0.00 |
| Audio Visual Recording/Editing executed by Fava and Wes Borg Paid for by Jesse Sherburne Total cost: | 720.00 |
| IPOD Video (including Power for Ipod and dock for Ipod) to run audio visual elements paid for by Jesse Sherburne. Total cost: | 476. 12 |
| DJ Equipment for Four event nights Paid for by the Art Gallery of Alberta Total cost: | 0.00 |
| Glasses, cash trays, bottle openers, and other items for operation of bar provided by Gallery. Total cost: | 0.00 |
| Total Cost to Artist: | 1196.12 |
| Total cost to Gallery | 0.00 |
| Total cost 3rd party | 0.00 |
| Total Sponsorship | 5500.00 |
| Total cost of Equipment and AV: | 6696.12 |

# Jesse Sherburne Budget Report

## Art Bar Instsllstion at the Art Gallery of Alberta

| Description of Cost/Income | Total |
|---|---|
| **Wall treatments:** | |
| **Wallpaper:** Paid for by Art Gallery of Alberta | |
| Total cost: | 350.00 |
| **Installation of Wallpaper:** Paid for by Jesse Sherburne | |
| Total cost: | 125.00 |
| **Stencil:** Design created by The Mustache Press and paid for by Jesse Sherburne. | |
| Total cost: | 125.00 |
| **Stencil Install:** Executed by Jesse Sherburne and Lindsey & Nick of The Moustache Press | |
| Total cost: | 0.00 |
| **Arborite:** (wood Grain) applied to Arch Wall by Bennett & Smith Millwork | |
| (Total included with millwork) | See Millwork |
| Total Cost to Artist: | 250.00 |
| Total cost to Gallery | 350.00 |
| Total cost 3rd party | 0.00 |
| Total Sponsorship | 0.00 |
| Total cost of Wall Treatments: | 600.00 |
| **Floor Treatments** | |
| Ikea Rugs Paid for by the Art Gallery of Alberta Total Value: 2x $199 plus tax. | 425.86 |
| Total Cost to Artist: | 0.00 |
| Total cost to Gallery | 425.86 |
| Total cost 3rd party | 0.00 |
| Total Sponsorship | 0.00 |
| Total cost of Flooring: | 425.86 |

# Jesse Sherburne Budget Report

## Art Bar Instsllstion at the Art Gallery of Alberta

| Description of Cost/Income | Total |
|---|---|
| **Ceiling Treatments and New Wall Construction** | |
| Sponsorship from Millenium interiors arranged by Jesse Sherburne. Complete interior development including drywall, steel stud, taping materials and labor. | |
| Total Cost to Artist: | 0.00 |
| Total cost to Gallery | 0.00 |
| Total cost 3rd party | 0.00 |
| Total Sponsorship | 6300.00 |
| Total cost of Interior Ceiling & Walls: | 6300.00 |
| **Custom Millwork** | |
| Construction and Finishing of Entrance | 1235.62 |
| Supply and Labor for Stand-up bar | 656.35 |
| Supply and Labor for Main Bar | 996.87 |
| Supply and installation of laminate for curved wall | 935.07 |
| Material for Main Bar (paid for by the University of Alberta) | 900.00 |
| Construction of main bar by Jesse Sherburne and Geoff lilge Geoff Lilgey paid for labour by Jesse Sherburne | 300.00 |
| Total Cost to Artist: | 4123.91 |
| Total cost to Gallery | 0.00 |
| Total cost 3rd party | 900.00 |
| Total Sponsorship | 0.00 |
| Total cost of Millwork: | 5023.91 |

# Jesse Sherburne Budget Report

## Art Bar Instsllstion at the Art Gallery of Alberta

| Description of Cost/Income | Total |
|---|---|
| **Electrical** | |
| Labour, materials and fixtures. (Initial necessary materials and all labor paid for by Jesse Sherburne Total: | 970.28 |
| All other material for Electrical paid for by gallery. Total | 2001.57 |
| Total Cost to Artist: | 970.28 |
| Total cost to Gallery | 2971.85 |
| Total cost 3rd party | 0.00 |
| Total Sponsorship | 0.00 |
| Total cost of Electrical: | 2971.85 |
| **Paint** | |
| Paint, Labor and materials covered by Gallery. Approx total: | 900.00 |
| Total Cost to Artist: | 0.00 |
| Total cost to Gallery | 900.00 |
| Total cost 3rd party | 0.00 |
| Total Sponsorship | 0.00 |
| Total cost of Labor: | 900.00 |

# Jesse Sherburne Budget Report

## Art Bar Instsllstion at the Art Gallery of Alberta

| Description of Cost/Income | Total |
|---|---|
| **Furniture** | |
| **Tables, Chairs, Stools etc** | |
| Table, Chairs and lounge seating provided by the university of Alberta students union through a sponsorship arranged by Jesse Sherburne | |
| Approx total value | |
| 30 chairs at 175 each | 5250.00 |
| 8 table at 200 each | 1600.00 |
| 4 lounge chairs at 200 each | 800.00 |
| University of Alberta Students Union Sponsorship Value | 7650.00 |
| Additional bar stools provided through sponsorship by The Savoy Lounge And Sugarbowl coffee shop. | |
| 14 bar stools at 175 each | 2450.00 |
| Total Cost to Artist: | 0.00 |
| Total cost to Gallery | 0.00 |
| Total cost 3rd party | 0.00 |
| Total Sponsorship | 10100.00 |
| Total cost of Furniture: | 10100.00 |

# Jesse Sherburne Budget Report

## Art Bar Instsllstion at the Art Gallery of Alberta

| Description of Cost/Income | Total |
|---|---|
| **Design Features** | |
| **Specialty and Accent lighting** | |
| Frank Gehry design Lights provided by LightForm through a sponsorship arranged by Jesse Sheburne<br>Total Value:<br>2 lights at $1200 each | 2400.00 |
| A sheet of 3m plexiglass for entrance lighting provided by ANT Design through a sponsorship arranged by Jesse Sheburne.<br>Total Value: | 1200.00 |
| Original Design lightbox tables provided by the artist (Jesse Sherburne)<br>Total Value | 900.00 |
| Flourescent Light Gels purchased by the Gallery.<br>Total cost: | 106.14 |
| Total Cost to Artist: | 0.00 |
| Total cost to Gallery | 106.14 |
| Total cost 3rd party | 0.00 |
| Total Sponsorship | 4500.00 |
| Total cost of specialty lighting | 4606.14 |
| **Labour** | |
| The labor for the project was largely covered under the sponsorship agreements made or included in the trades invoices paid by Jesse Sheburne. Some labour for moving furniture, painting and general cleanup provided by the Art Gallery of Alberta. | |

# Jesse Sherburne Budget Report

## Art Bar Instsllstion at the Art Gallery of Alberta

| Description of Cost/Income | Total |
|---|---|
| **Miscellaneous and Promotional** | |
| **Signage**<br>Provided by Ariel Signs under a sponsorship agreement arranged by Jesse Sherburne.<br>Ariel provided two neon signs and two large banners.<br>Total Value: | 12000.00 |
| **Promotional Posters**<br>Designed by The Mustache Press and paid for by Jesse Sherburne.<br>Total cost: | 300.00 |
| **Promotional Poster Distribution.**<br>The Main Staple executed distribution and the invoice was jointly paid for by Jesse Sherburne and the Art Gallery of Alberta.<br>Total cost covered by Artist:<br>Total cost covered by Gallery: | 150.00<br>146.80 |
| **Promotional buttons:**<br>Designed and executed by The Mustache Press.<br>Paid for by Jesse Sherburne.<br>Total cost: | 300.00 |
| **Interior Decoration Elements:**<br>These included pillows, shelves, mirrors, and vases purchased at Ikea and paid for by the Gallery.<br>Total cost: | 1028.91 |

# Jesse Sherburne Budget Report

## Art Bar Instsllstion at the Art Gallery of Alberta

| Description of Cost/Income | Total |
|---|---|
| **MTV Appearance.** | |
| The opportunity for the artist to appear on MTV manifested. The flight costs of the trip were covered jointly between The Art Gallery of Alberta and MTV. The costs of hotel, transportation and food were covered by Jesse Sherburne. | |
| Total cost covered by Gallery: | 243.61 |
| Total cost covered by MTV: | 243.61 |
| Total cost covered by Artist: | 217.27 |
| **Photography.** | |
| Photography of event night by Connor McNally | |
| Total cost: | 100.00 |
| Still photography of installation by Tina Chang | |
| Total cost: | 250.00 |
| **Miscellaneous costs to Artist:** | |
| These costs include extra materials required for the execution of project, promotion of project, sponsorship package printing, business/ office expenses, etc. | |
| Total costs: | 598.04 |
| Total Cost to Artist: | 1915.31 |
| Total cost to Gallery | 1419.32 |
| Total cost 3rd party | 243.61 |
| Total Sponsorship | 12000.00 |
| Total Miscellaneous and Promotional Cost | 15578.24 |

# Jesse Sherburne Budget Report

## Art Bar Instsllstion at the Art Gallery of Alberta

| Description of Cost/Income | Total |
|---|---|
| **Total Expenses** | |
| Total Cost to Artist: | 8455.62 |
| Total cost to Gallery | 6202.89 |
| Total cost 3rd party | 1143.61 |
| Total Sponsorship | 38400.00 |
| Total Cost of Project | 54202.12 |
| **Total Revenue and Payment by Artist** | |
| Alberta Foundation for the Arts Grant | 5000.00 |
| Artist Fee from Art Gallery of Alberta | 1200.00 |
| Artist talk fee from Art Gallery of Alberta | 150.00 |
| Artist personal Investment in Project | 2105.61 |
| Total Expenditures by artist | 8455.62 |

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